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Friend or foe?

Aggregators connect with consumers at a scale beyond most fitness operators and – where they're credible – look for a win:win relationship with gyms. A new report gives insights into how this is panning out

The debate about whether aggregators are good for the industry prompts different and sometimes extreme views from people, depending on their own business model, level of market penetration and ambitions for expansion.

In a bid to introduce more facts into the conversation, industry company Huddle has published *The Aggregation in Fitness Report* to scrutinise its own impact on the industry.

The insights will be useful for operators when considering whether or not to engage with aggregators, although Huddle is clear that the numbers only relate to its own business model.

Gym users were polled to establish the impact the service has on their behaviour in three key areas: *substitution* – do they cancel to use Huddle?; *intervention* – does Huddle acquire customers traditional gym operators would have signed up; and *incrementality* – does Huddle create incremental value?

Data and methodology for the report were audited by research company, Fusion with a variance of ± 6 being noted.

The report shows that 21 out of every 100 Huddle users will go on to join a gym directly, while only one in 100 cancelled a gym membership to use the service.

When it comes to intervention 3-6 in 100 Huddle users were acquired through potential marketing interventions and in relation to incrementality, findings show that 22 in 100 have a direct gym membership and use Huddle in addition.

There's evidence aggregators are able to keep some consumers in the sector, despite their plans to quit a gym. The data shows that 16 of every 100 Huddle customers cancelled a membership for 'organic reasons' – ie, not because of the aggregation service – but that they continued to use a gym through Huddle, meaning they still contributed to revenues – albeit it at a lower level – and also via their secondary spend.

Tellingly, 83 per cent of the people polled who were lapsed health club members had not belonged to a club for an average of nearly 18 months, indicating that Huddle may be acting as a gateway back into health club membership.

So, with their huge reach, do aggregators tap into new markets that gyms can't reach alone? It seems this is the case.

In addition, the report found more flexible models are popular with consumers, as fifty per cent of those polled who had never belonged to a gym said they'd avoided taking on a membership because they didn't want to be tied into a



PHOTO: SHANE & STARS

Aggregators are disrupting the industry

“ The report shows that 21 out of every 100 users will go on to join a gym directly, while only one in 100 cancelled to use the aggregator ”

contract. This appetite for a more flexible model has been one of the factors driving the (membership-free) budget sector and illustrates why budget operators are among those who most often question and challenge the role of aggregators.

Flexibility is emerging as a major driver for many consumers when making choices. With 35 per cent of non-members saying they value the opportunity to exercise close to home and to work and also when travelling, we expect aggregators to play to this strength and demand in developing their businesses.

Congratulations to Huddle for the transparency and for bringing more facts into the debate to move the industry forward.

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FEBRUARY 2020 No 276



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MEET THE TEAM



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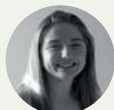
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Public Affairs Media Partner

©Cybertrek Ltd 2019 ISSN 1361-3510 (print) / 2397-2351 (online)

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Ageing by example

Jo Cherrett, COO, Trafford Leisure

Research by Public Health England (PHE) and ukactive shows older people generally feel more self-conscious when exercising in public and frequent gyms less often than other age groups, with as many as 14 per cent of over-55s in the UK not exercising at all.

Ageing is a hot topic, with PHE and the Centre for Ageing Better campaigning to stop age being a barrier to physical activity.

At Trafford Leisure we've been actively employing older people for some time. The average age of our class instructors is 46-years-old and at least one instructor at each site is aged over 50. Many of our instructors see their fitness careers lasting in to their seventies, and with an average customer age of 45



and rising, we must be doing something right!

The age of our staff encourages, inspires and motivates many of our older customers. Some of our instructors have returned to work from surgery, cancer and other medical conditions, demonstrating to

our customers that exercise is relevant to all ages, can help prolong mobility and actively promotes recovery from medical procedures and conditions. Rather than using age as a barrier to exercise, they become role models for the Trafford community.

Pete Lockwood is a Level three fitness instructor in his fifties, who teaches many classes, including Spinning and Body Pump. He designs fitness programmes for our medical health referral customers.

Pete suffers with asthma and willingly shares this

fact with customers, demonstrating how exercise can ease his symptoms.

We've made efforts to make our classes inclusive to all, actively encouraging older people with special rates and bespoke classes, including Falls Prevention Sessions, Simple Circuits, Water Wellness and Walking Football. Sport and leisure is no longer the domain of the young and this isn't a fad or a trend, we lead by example with both staff and customers, treating physical activity as part of their lives, whether they're eight- or 80-years-old.

“ We lead by example with both staff and customers, treating physical activity as part of their lives, whether they're eight- or 80-years-old ”

Trafford Leisure is actively employing and attracting older people to exercise, with an average customer age of 45



Don't feel obliged to take inappropriate people onto referral programmes simply because they've been referred, says Stokes

Make exercise referral more clinically meaningful

Stuart Stokes, MD, ReferAll

Evidence, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, shows the benefits of exercise referral schemes (EOR) are not as large as hoped and concludes UK roll-out needs to be rethought, to maximise effectiveness.

The report drew on measurements including BMI, BP and resting heart rate from 23,731 active participants in 13 schemes. Despite analysis revealing significant improvements in these measures, when figures were compared with thresholds for clinical meaningfulness, the size of changes was small, meaning their impact is unclear.

So how can EOR providers ensure they're producing 'meaningful' results? The issue isn't solely a lack of data – this was the largest study to date – it's also that schemes aren't recruiting the right people.



Stuart Stokes

If we go back to basics, EOR's aim is to increase activity levels; this is how 'success' is measured.

Therefore, to get meaningful results, schemes must only recruit those who are genuinely inactive. If a person doesn't meet inclusion criteria, you're undermining the impact of the service if you bring them into a scheme.

People surveyed for last years' report were, on aggregate, already 'moderately active'. Although they became more active, this change was not seen as positive, as they started from an already active point.

In order to get sought-after, clinically meaningful results, operators need to tighten up the access to EOR.

Don't feel obliged to take inappropriate people simply because they've been referred. Be strict about pre-screening, consider deploying a standardised questionnaire

and consider asking questions about sleeping, diet and wellbeing scores. Being inactive has a significant effect on these. Your aim is to move people from an inactive status to an active one. Only then can you collect the right type of data to prove EOR works.

It's what goes in that matters. Who you select will, quite literally, determine the success or failure of your EOR scheme, as well as funding for future schemes and – further down the line – the results of future studies such as these.

“If we go back to basics, EOR's aim is to increase activity levels; this is how 'success' is measured. Therefore, to get meaningful results, schemes must only recruit those who are genuinely inactive.”

“

People don't want to just come in and run on a treadmill or sit on a bike, they want an experience

DUNCAN JEFFORD

REGIONAL DIRECTOR, EVERYONE ACTIVE

Leisure Management company Everyone Active has recently launched a boutique workout experience called FORTIS Powered By Speedflex, following a collaboration with HIIT specialist Speedflex.

The concept offers 30-minute workouts using Speedflex machines which generate personalised resistance.

By January 2021, 15 studios will be opened in total, with three located in London and the remaining twelve situated outside. To date, three are up and running, in Hemel Hempstead, Chichester and London's Soho.

Each studio costs around £100k, including equipment, and features four types of Fortis workouts with a total of 25 classes a week on offer.

Three more sites are due to go live in April, followed by four in September and a further five in January 2021.

MAJOR SHIFT

Duncan Jefford, regional director of Everyone Active, told HCM: "Fortis was created because we felt the whole of the leisure industry is shifting quite significantly in terms of what the customer is looking for.

"We believe there's a stereotypical type of leisure centre and think this really needs to change. Thus over the past couple of years, we've focused on branding, the overall feel and now we're focusing on the offering. We believe we need to be offering a boutique experience that's affordable. ▶



Duncan Jefford is driving innovation and partnerships at Everyone Active



Up to 15 Fortis studios will open in the next year



Launching Fortis, L-R, Mark Simpson, Duncan Jefford, Alexandra Burke, Paul Ferris, Cheryl Hersey

► "There's also been a recent shift to a more experience-led workout – people don't want to just come in and run on a treadmill or sit on a bike, they want an experience. So for us it's about partnering with people that can offer that level of experience and engagement."

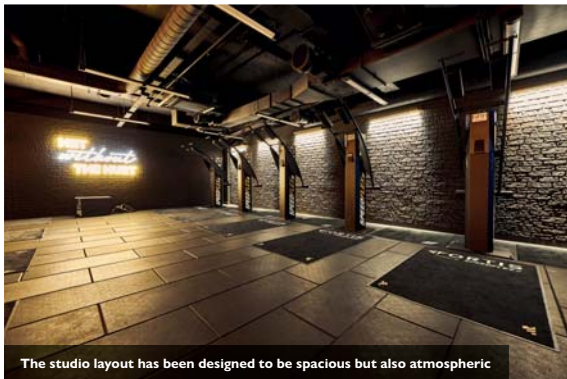
Everyone Active has other existing partnerships with fitness franchise F45 and yoga chain MoreYoga.

"We began working with other companies because we wanted to differentiate the offering, but we soon realised there was a gap in the HIIT market," says Jefford. "However, London is very saturated in this market so we looked to develop a unique product."

"We wanted to create something different and we feel that Speedflex equipment is unique in itself. The look and feel is completely different from anything else in the market at this moment in time, and because it's non-DOMS exercise, customers won't feel any muscle soreness the next day, despite having done an intense 30-minute workout."

"The beauty of it is you could use the equipment seven days a week."

Everyone Active and Speedflex began talks in June 2019, but although Everyone Active liked the product and the physiological rationale behind it, the consensus was that the branding and marketing around it required



The studio layout has been designed to be spacious but also atmospheric

development to fully fit Everyone Active's needs in relation to the new launch.

"Over the last six months, we've worked to develop our exclusive Fortis brand, including the look, feel, branding, music and everything that sits behind it," says Jefford. "The end result has been a totally collaborative effort."

FORTIS Powered By Speedflex is being marketed to consumers through

social media, using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Everyone Active had over 2,000 bookings in January and has seen 85 per cent class occupancy in Chichester and Hemel Hempstead.

"You could argue that exclusively using social media will attract a certain demographic, but what we've seen is that the age range for Fortis classes varies between 20 and 60 years, and we've also

The Speedflex workout is non-DOMS, so people can work out more regularly

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seen nearly a 50/50 split between men and women," says Jefford.

Drop-in prices for a Fortis class costs £15 in London and £10 elsewhere, while Everyone Active members with a premium membership – costing £56 – get unlimited access across the entire leisure centre menu, including Fortis classes.

DELIVERING FORTIS

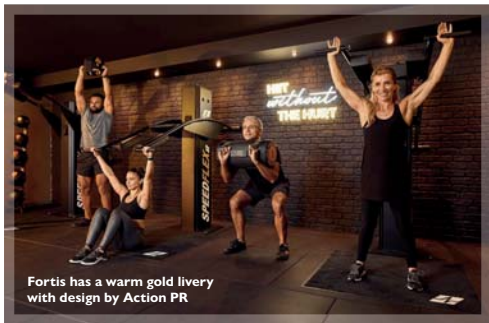
Everyone Active is using a hybrid model for Fortis staff – deploying members of its fitness team who have gone through a programme of training with Speedflex master trainers while also recruiting new team members externally.

"We've picked people who can deliver classes in terms of generating energy and enjoyment, rather than choosing candidates who only know what they're doing technically," says Jefford. "Fortis has got to be an experience."

There will be 10 staff per studio and Everyone Active currently has 30 staff qualified to deliver Fortis classes. The aim is to have 120 to 150 this time next year.

NEW CYCLING EXPERIENCE

"Next we're looking at developing a cycling experience and doing something bigger and better than what's currently out there, in the market," says Jefford, "but we're also focusing on developing our holistic offering, because at the moment



Fortis has a warm gold livery with design by Action PR

we don't feel it's something that's fully covered within the marketplace."

The partnership with Fortis represents an entrepreneurial move from Everyone Active but Jefford contends this decision was necessary to ensure the business can compete against other operators.

"I think there's been a massive strain on local authority finances recently," says Jefford. "If you wind it back ten years most leisure centre's operators would get a subsidy to run them, the reality is now that for 75 per cent of contracts, we're

actually paying the council to run them. So we need to be more entrepreneurial in terms of generating revenue to run the facilities and at the same time keep the offering where it needs to be.

"We're embedding commerciality into Everyone Active to enable us to compete on a product-level with the private sector. We're also working to make sure our team at Everyone Active understands that we're a business and that we need to be commercial in the way we operate to keep up and to contend."



PACE labelling would be a simple, user-friendly way of informing people, at a glance, of the amount of physical activity required for the food they are considering eating



AMANDA DALEY

PROFESSOR OF BEHAVIOURAL MEDICINE, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

Your research recommends a new type of labelling for food, how would this work?

Physical activity calorie equivalent (PACE) labelling would use a small symbol to show people how long they would need to walk or run in order to burn off the calories in the food they eat. For example, a 400-calorie chocolate muffin would take 70 minutes of walking or 40 of running to burn off.

How do you know PACE labelling would be more effective than the current approach?

We're not advocating that current food labelling is abandoned, we're suggesting

that PACE labelling is added to the current labels. There's only limited evidence to show that nutritional information, such as calorie content, works. Most people find it too confusing as it doesn't provide any context.

PACE labelling would be a simple, user-friendly way of informing people, at a glance, of the amount of physical activity required to burn off the food they are considering eating.

As people only spend a few seconds looking at food and deciding whether to buy it, a simple, easily understandable approach is needed.

We're interested in saving lives and finding ways to reduce obesity and

cardiovascular disease and are always looking for ways to educate the public to choose more healthy ways to eat, as well as getting people more physically active.

This recommendation is one way of targeting both behaviours in the whole population. Other research we've done has shown that PACE label information can prevent people from gaining weight, so we know it has the potential to positively impact the health of the public.

What activities would you like to see on labels?

Walking – because it's an activity everyone can relate to – and running. Most people wouldn't consider running, so if they know

**Daley says PACE
labelling is proven
to inspire people to
improve their lifestyle**



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/EPICSTOCKMEDIA, STILLIFE, SHUTTERSTOCK/MOVING MOMENT

they have to do a 95 minute run to work off a medium sized pizza, they'll probably decide to go without it!

How did you go about proving PACE labelling could work?

We analysed data from 14 previous studies from around the world, which explored the impact of an exercise-based labelling system.

After collating the studies, we did a meta analysis and concluded that PACE labelling leads to people eating 63 calories fewer on each eating occasion. As most people have three daily meals and two snacks, this is a significant reduction in calories during a day.

Additionally, in 2016-17, we also did a two-group, double-blind, randomised controlled trial, published in the BMJ, to test the effectiveness of PACE label information over the Christmas holidays, a time when many people gain weight which they don't shift.

The study involved 272 adults; one group was encouraged to restrain behaviours, via regular self weighing

and reflection on their weight trajectory, and received weight management strategies including PACE information about regularly consumed Christmas foods and drinks. The

***"A 400-calorie chocolate
muffin would take
70 minutes of walking
or 40 minutes of running
to burn off"***

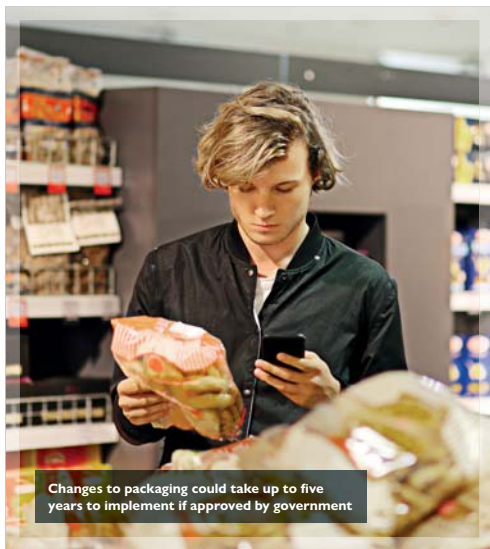


comparator group only received a leaflet on healthy living.

Our study found that the group that had the benefit of the PACE labelling didn't gain any weight during the festive season, while the comparator group gained an average of 0.37kg. People said they were shocked about how much activity would be required to burn off many Christmas calories and so simply decided not to eat them.

People assume obesity comes about through gluttony, but from a whole population perspective, it actually occurs by just eating a bit too much at each meal, every day. So we need some interventions to nudge people into good behaviours every time they eat.

Most of the population are not doing enough physical activity every day either, so we need strategies to promote and remind the public of participating in regular physical activity every day: PACE labelling has the potential to do this. ▶



Changes to packaging could take up to five years to implement if approved by government

"If people know they have to do a 95 minute run to work off a medium sized pizza, they'll probably decide to go without it!"

► **How easy would this be to implement? Is there opposition from the food industry?**

Like with the sugar tax, there has been some criticism from the food industry, that doesn't want people to be armed with these facts. It's so easy to go into a coffee chain and consume 2,000 to 3,000 calories – a day's calorie allowance – just by having a cake and a frappuccino.

There's been criticism that PACE labelling is misleading, because men and women burn off calories at a different rate, but actually there is less than 15 calories difference between an average man and an average woman running for 10 minutes.

Other critics have said that it might prompt eating disorders.

Of course we always have to be mindful of any unintended effects from any new strategy and consider any unwanted consequences, but there's no evidence that physical activity campaigns lead to eating disorders. Information on calories is already available on food labels and PACE labelling is a way of translating existing information.

Most of the population are overweight and thousands of people die every year from diseases related to being overweight,



● In 2015, 603.7m adults globally were estimated to be obese, with more than 70 countries showing a doubling in the prevalence of obesity since 1980.

● Reports from longitudinal weight tracking studies show that each year on average the population gains a small amount of weight (0.4-1kg) but that weight is gained more rapidly during particular periods, such as the Christmas holiday season, because of prolonged over-consumption and sedentary behaviour. These weight gains were not fully lost afterwards, so over 10 years would lead to a 5-10kg increase in body weight which is enough to drive the obesity epidemic.

● On Christmas Day alone an individual might consume 6,000 calories – three times the recommended daily allowance.

● People have reported that family celebrations provide the greatest challenge for eating restraint.

including cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. We want to try and prevent these deaths in the population and help the public lead long healthy lives by maintaining good energy balance.

What are the next steps for your team?

We'll complete some more real life studies and once we have enough evidence, we'd like to go to the government and ask them to consider the results and, if appropriate, to legislate. It won't be a fast turnaround, we're expecting it to take up to five years.

Is there anything the health and fitness industry could be doing to support this in the meantime?

Anything the industry can do to educate people about maintaining good energy balance through healthy eating and participation in regular physical activity would be great. There's often the tendency after exercise for people to treat themselves with food and end up consuming more calories than they expended in their workout, so only selling healthy choices in cafés and vending machines and placing PACE labelling on food and drinks sold in clubs would be extremely helpful in supporting members to maintain their weight.



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We'd like to think we're offering something unique that will encourage members to grow their own vegetables and reconnect to their relationship with food



STEPHEN AUCOTT & MATT BROWN

ODYSSEY HEALTH CLUB AND SPA

Located just north of London in the Hertfordshire countryside, a 15-year-old independent health club has kickstarted a healthy-eating scheme using an on-site potager project.

Odyssey Health Club's owner, Stephen Aucott, and head chef, Matt Brown, have driven the initiative to integrate home-grown produce into the club's food offering to offer a different and healthy dining option for their clientele.

Aucott and Brown are aiming to use the scheme to incorporate as much fresh produce into the menu as possible.

How did the idea come about?

We already had a strong focus on nutrition in general at the club and had a good relationship with our local organic farm. Plus, both we and our members have had a growing interest in local, organic, fresh food for some years. It was actually a TV programme – called *Monty Don's French Gardens* – that provided great inspiration. He explored potager gardens and the culinary opportunities they present. This was the inspiration we needed to get the scheme started. We were already actively working on

the presentation of the club grounds for the past few years, so the step to growing vegetables on-site was a natural progression from this and one we openly welcomed. We currently have a greenhouse, five raised beds and two hot bin composters."

What is grown and why?

We're growing a range of fruit, vegetables and various herbs, including strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, onions, carrots and beetroot. We've also got some apple and cherry trees.



Odyssey head chef Matt Brown harvests potager-grown herbs for the table

We decided on this selection because these are the staple elements of most dishes in the kitchen, and depending on seed success, we're planning to add in other items in the next growing season, such as edible flowers for the salads.

At the moment we're serving up carrot soup and carrot cake, but any other food that's ripe on the day will also be harvested to go into the existing dishes, such as salads, sauces or dressings.

As we grow the scheme, the volume of produce will increase, which will allow us to supply more of the menu.

Why is it important to Odyssey to serve home-grown produce?

From a health perspective, this approach is congruent with the messages we give members regarding their food. We really enjoy the process of growing the vegetables and it is a point of difference for us versus other health clubs locally.

We would like to think that we're offering something unique and, ideally, this will encourage members to grow their own vegetables at home, and ultimately to reconnect their relationship with food and where it comes from.

The scheme also reduces our waste significantly, which is something very important to the club.

How have members responded?

Feedback has been really positive. Having the ability to promote 'Homegrown Tomato Soup' for example was something members commented on and they were really excited to know what was coming next. Their response is really encouraging as it demonstrates a positive engagement on subjects outside of just training, which is crucial for us. ▶



The Odyssey Health Club in Knebworth is adopting a more holistic approach

► **How much does the scheme cost to run?**

I would estimate about £500 per year, now that we've bought the greenhouse. We had scaffold boards donated by one of our members to build our raised beds, which was a huge help.

Our head of maintenance, Jason Miller, does the majority of the day-to-day management of the scheme, but once the planting has taken place, it's mostly watering consistently and weeding. Oh, and keeping the rabbits out as much as we possibly can!

What have you learned from doing this?

We've learned that running this kind of scheme isn't difficult, but it does take consistency! However, it's certainly been worth our efforts, as the increased engagement with the members has been fantastic. Also, the fact that seasonal food is driving the dish of the day is one of the most rewarding aspects of the scheme, because this is exactly how it should be.

Do you feel the health and fitness industry is doing enough to encourage healthy eating?

My first response is no, but it's obviously very difficult to identify what healthy eating is from one individual to another. Of course, there are basic principles – reduce sugar and lower refined carb intake, increase uptake of organic produce, eat more vegetables – but being too prescriptive with members can be off-putting for them, so it's a fine line.



We try to educate our members to read more about the basis of a healthy diet and to make informed decisions and understand what they're eating and why – but as we all know, it's an incredibly in-depth subject and what works for one person to achieve their goals, may not work for another. We've been in the industry for 25 years and what we thought we knew 10 years ago has completely changed in recent years.

What are your plans for the future, will the scheme expand?

We've installed more raised beds for next year's planting and we're clearing additional space for a polytunnel to increase our production.

We've been advised that a polytunnel can produce as much as a field, so this is where we intend to go. We're very fortunate that we have the space to do this, so we won't waste the opportunity.



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In the Zone

Technogym is helping Odyssey Health Club launch new gym floor formats that enhance the member experience



Odyssey Health Club's Stevenage site has been home to a club since the 1970s, but the venue you'll find there today has been thoughtfully developed to offer the true health club experience.

Ian Riches, club director at Odyssey Health Club, tells us how the vision for the business has been brought to life.

"Odyssey Health Club was launched in the late 90s, and I came on board in 2004 to help consolidate the business to focus on the core elements of a health club," he says. "Although we have a gym and group exercise classes, we're not just a gym – we offer leisure, relaxation, food, and the spa, which is a huge part of the business."

"It was important that we offer a true health club experience by creating a social environment to differentiate us from other leisure facilities."

Enhancing the member experience

Last year Riches thought it was time to modernise the gym floor offering to enhance the total customer journey.

Once he started to look at the digital experiences on offer, Ian sought the

guidance and support of Technogym and soon discovered how new innovative formats and a change in layout can create more engagement on the gym floor.

"Technogym gives us expert advice on design, layout, and on how to get the most out of the equipment and digital," he explains. "They're interested in understanding what we need – we feed them ideas, and they give us great advice."

With the help of Technogym, Odyssey has changed the gym layout to improve

uptake of gym floor classes, and to increase staff and member engagement.

"We run small group sessions using the Technogym Skillbike, Skillrun, and Skillrow Classes," says Riches. "The Uptake of group exercise has increased significantly. Having central areas to run classes helps us engage with all members. Having the equipment in the middle of the gym has brought different people into the group element, because they can see what is going on and feel encouraged to have a go."



Odyssey offers small group formats using Skillrow



With the advice of Technogym, Odyssey has changed its gym layout to improve engagement



"It was important we offer a true health club experience by creating a social environment to differentiate us from other leisure facilities"

Ian Riches, club director,
Odyssey Health Club

The new layout powered by Technogym has enabled Odyssey to attract a wider range of member demographics

Reaching different demographics

Odyssey Health Club has two distinct types of members: what Riches calls the day time and the evening members. He explains how the Technogym digital solutions helped Odyssey connect with all types of members.

"Since installing the new zones we decided to change the way we deliver our inductions, focusing on really showing people what the Skill Line equipment can do," he says.

"Technogym Skill Line is very different, so we run workshops where we educate members on each element of the equipment, including its features and benefits. Uptake has been great, and feedback shows people really appreciate knowing just how much they can do on the equipment."

Offering gym floor classes focusing on a specific product is appealing to a wider variety of member. "For example," says Riches, "we ran summer Skillbike classes which replicated Tour de France hill climbs. These were led by cyclists, and brought in a new group of customers who would usually prefer to exercise outside. We've never had the ability to do this before."

Pleasing the crowd

The feedback on Odyssey's recent upgrades show that they continue to strengthen the health club brand.

"We have great communication with our members," says Riches. "We'll always question what we do. The quality of our customer experience drives our commercial decisions. Ultimately, we want to be a great health club where people get results, enjoy their visits, and improve their health."

"We combine listening to our members with watching what's developing in the industry. We make sure new purchases are future-proofed so they will still deliver value when we make inevitable changes to our gym and studios."

"We never sit still, and with support from Technogym, we know we'll always offer the best health club experience."

As Odyssey has discovered, changing the layout of a gym's space can revolutionise the offering and transform customer engagement, instructor input and the entire member journey.

Partnership with Technogym

This round of investment is the latest in a long relationship between Odyssey Health Club and Technogym.

"We come back to Technogym not just because they develop market-leading equipment, but because of their support and training," says Riches.



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DLL acquires German operator Hamburg Meridian

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has acquired the Hamburg Meridian Group, which operates eight premium health and spa clubs in Germany.

The deal comes 18 months after DLL bought its first German club – in Bad

Homburg in 2018 – and is “the next step” in the company’s ambitious plans to expand further into the German market and across Europe.

The eight Meridian clubs currently have nearly 39,000 members between them, bringing the total number of members across the DLL portfolio of clubs to 660,000.

DLL plans to invest more than €20m (£17m) in the clubs to further develop their premium wellness offer.

The deal will see Hamburg Meridian’s managing partner Leo Eckstein – who has managed the Meridian Group for 20 years and has also been co-owner since a management buy-out initiated by him at the



Hamburg Meridian operates eight clubs across the country

beginning of 2007 – selling his shares to DLL.

Glenn Earlam, chief executive of DLL, said: “The Meridian Group is a strong and well-respected operator in the German health and fitness industry, and will be a

key strategic acquisition for David Lloyd Leisure.

“There is a high demand for premium spa and fitness clubs in Germany, so it is an attractive market for us.”

More: http://lei.sr/W6B8W_H



There is a high demand for premium fitness clubs in Germany

Glenn Earlam

Snap Fitness: global growth a priority for 2020

Snap Fitness has made international expansion its priority for 2020, with plans to enter new territories during the year.

The franchised fitness chain saw healthy growth during 2019, with a particular push taking place in emerging wellness markets. It opened its first club in Taiwan and the brand saw its portfolio grow by 46 per cent in the Asia Pacific region. The brand also recently opened its 100th club in Europe, while overall membership across its global estate increased by nine per cent during the year.

“New gyms are in development across the



Snap Fitness saw healthy growth during 2019

world and our international expansion is a priority in 2020 – we plan to both expand in current partner countries and enter new markets,” said

Allison McElroy, chief global development officer of Snap Fitness’ owner, Lift Brands.

Snap is one of several fitness brands and services

owned by Lift Brands. Others include 9Round, YogaFit Studios, Steele Fitness and the virtual fitness platform Fitness On Demand.



We plan to both expand in current partner countries and enter new markets

Allison McElroy

More: http://lei.sr/B6j5S_H

Wearables for seniors: AI tech that predicts falls and ailments

A new product aimed at the ageing population is combining wearable fitness tech with AI to create a device designed to help predict potentially harmful ailments.

US-based AI specialist CarePredict has launched the Tempo Series 3 wearable tracker, described as the world's first wearable that can detect small changes in the daily activity patterns of seniors. These changes in patterns can often precede falls, malnutrition, depression, and urinary tract infections (UTIs). The tech is able to autonomously observe and



Data from contentional trackers aren't sufficient to assess senior health

Satish Movva

chart the activities of daily living (ADLs) – such as eating, cooking, walking, sleeping and bathroom use patterns.

The system uses sensors, indoor location data, machine



The system uses sensors and AI to learn “normal” activity patterns

learning and AI to learn the senior's “normal” activity pattern and then alerts family and friends if there is a deviation from the normal patterns. These insights allow families of seniors to know when they are skipping meals, aren't sleeping well, are less active or if things are different than usual.

“The data from conventional fitness trackers and smartwatches are not sufficient in assessing the continued wellness of a senior – so we developed Tempo specifically for the care of seniors,” said CarePredict CEO and founder Satish Movva.

More: http://lei.sr/j7g9B_H

Gold's Gym reports ‘strongest growth in company history’

Gold's Gym completed 22 US franchise agreements and 35 new global openings during 2019 – the most in a single year in the company's history.



We're proud to continue to grow this brand

Craig Sherwood

The group has focused on emerging fitness markets, with nine new sites opening in Japan, eight in India and five in Saudi Arabia. It also secured new international master license agreements for Iraq, Australia and New Zealand.

Also throughout 2019, the company worked to consolidate and optimise brand ownership through franchisee acquisition of company-owned clubs.

“With some major expansion opportunities already in the works, we're proud to play a role in continuing to grow this



The firm's growth during 2019 focused on emerging markets

brand,” said Craig Sherwood, chief development officer.

On its domestic US market, its biggest new franchise deals were for North Carolina

(eight clubs), Tennessee (five clubs) and Southern California (four clubs).

More: http://lei.sr/g5f7U_H

Digme Fitness acquires Another Space to grow estate

Digme Fitness has acquired Another Space – the boutique studio arm of premium health club operator Third Space.

The deal includes Another Space's two London sites in Covent Garden and Bank, increasing the number of boutique studios in Digme's portfolio to eight.

Another Space was set up as a standalone boutique fitness concept by premium

club operator Third Space in 2016. The two Another Space studios sat alongside – but independent from – the full-service Third Space clubs.

"We have always admired Another Space with its high-quality team, beautiful studios and prime locations," said Digme co-founder and CEO Geoff Bamber.

"This transaction will benefit our existing community."

More: http://lei.sr/n2V6T_H



The deal includes Another Space's two London sites



We have always admired Another Space with its high-quality team

Geoff Bamber



Stuart Broster was named Anytime Fitness UK CEO in 2017

Neil Randall to replace Stuart Broster as Anytime Fitness CEO

Stuart Broster, chief executive of Anytime Fitness UK, will step down from his role in April 2020.

Broster, who was named CEO in August 2017, recently relocated to Scotland and outlined his desire to set up his own consultancy business.

During his tenure, Broster has overseen Anytime Fitness UK's growth to become the second-largest private gym operator in the UK, the brand's repositioning from "convenience to coaching" and the launch of a new gym design. He will be replaced by Neil Randall, the current chief operating officer.

Randall has been heavily involved in developing and implementing Anytime Fitness UK's future strategy.



Stuart has had an incredible impact on Anytime Fitness UK

Neil Randall

"Stuart has had an incredible impact on Anytime Fitness UK, overseeing a growth and transition period for the business and I'm excited to continue the journey and build on the progress," said Randall.

More: http://lei.sr/Y5w6E_H



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The Gym Group plans further expansion as revenues hit £150m

The Gym Group is set to continue its fast pace of growth in 2020, with plans to open – on average – around two new sites per month during the year.

Announcing its pre-close statement, the company said it is on track to open between 15 and 20 standard gyms and up to eight small box sites during the year.

The announcement follows a strong 2019 for the group, a year in which it saw revenues

jump by nearly a quarter (23.6 per cent), hitting £150m for the first time (£153.1m).

During the year, it opened 20 new sites – including two small-box sites – taking the total number of gyms in its portfolio to 175.

In a statement, the group also said it had made “good progress” with its Live It premium pricing product. A total of 150,000 members were subscribed to Live It during 2019, translating



Gym Group CEO Richard Darwin said 2019 was ‘very successful’

to 18.9 per cent of its total membership – a significant increase from the 11.7 per cent seen in 2018.

“2019 has been another very successful year in which

The Gym Group has again delivered substantial growth in members and revenue,” said Richard Darwin, CEO.

More: http://lei.sr/J3P3u_H

This Girl Can celebrated for featuring ‘real’ female fitness stories

The latest edition of the highly-successful This Girl Can campaign has been celebrated for its ‘taboo-busting’ and “brave” take on female fitness.

The new body-positive advert is seen as a perfect antidote to what has been described as “unrealistic images of women” often used in fitness campaigns.

The research also highlighted the possible negative role played by so-called influencers.

Less than a fifth (18 per cent) of women who follow fitness influencers find their highly-polished and curated personalities relatable,

while nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of women are actually negatively affected by influencer content – as it often makes them feel bad about themselves.

Sport England has now called for influencers, media and brands to feature more

realistic and diverse imagery of women exercising.

“We need to convince women they don’t need to be in shape or super confident to take part,” said Lisa O’Keefe, Sport England director of insight.

More: http://lei.sr/M8q3u_H



Women don’t need to be in shape or super confident to take part

Lisa O’Keefe



The film has been designed to show the ‘raw, unfiltered reality’ of women exercising

Mintel study: more than six million Brits now have gym membership

The number of people in the UK who are members of a private health and fitness club reached a record-breaking six million during 2019.

According to research by Mintel, the number of people with a private gym membership has risen by 15 per cent since 2014 – from 5.3 million to 6.1 million in 2019.

The increase in memberships over the past

12 months has helped grow the total revenue registered by private health and fitness clubs to nearly £3.4bn during 2019 – an increase of 4.1 per cent on 2018 levels.

"The rise of lower-cost options and increased locations has made private gyms an accessible form of leisure, while a greater focus by consumers on healthier living and exercise is also providing a boost to the



Group exercise has been a major driver in the increase

Lauren Ryan



The number of members has grown by 15 per cent since 2014

sector," said Lauren Ryan, Mintel leisure analyst.

Ryan added that group exercise classes have been a major driver in the increase in memberships. Mintel figures

show that almost three in five (58 per cent) of gym-goers say classes are the main reason they visit a club.

More: http://lei.sr/x9W4R_H

F45 continues expansion amid stock market listing rumours

F45 is expanding its European footprint with the launch of two new studios in Manchester, UK.

The Australia-based franchised operator already has a strong presence in a number of big UK cities and

towns – including London, Brighton, Birmingham and Reading – and is now spreading its reach in the north-west of the country.

Scheduled to open in February, the two sites – F45 Manchester Northern Quarter and F45 Salford Central – will follow the same high intensity, group training format that the brand has become synonymous with.

Michael Dean, UK sales director for F45, added: "Our goal is for there to be an F45 studio on almost every corner of the world – and with the accelerated growth in recent years, we are confident that we can make this happen."

The chain is planning further UK and Ireland



Our goal is to have a studio on almost every corner of the world

Michael Dean



F45 currently has more than 1,300 studios around the world

openings for 2020 – including locations in Southampton, Dublin and Cheltenham.

The latest openings come as US-based financial news service *Bloomberg* reported that F45 was planning to list on the stock market in the US.

In a news report, *Bloomberg* claimed that the company had "filed confidentially for a US initial public offering, according to people with knowledge of the matter".

More: http://lei.sr/Y9R75_H

David Lloyd Clubs trials restaurant promoting mental health

David Lloyd Clubs opened a pop-up restaurant in Hackney in January, designed specifically to complement positive mental health.

The health club operator teamed up with a team of nutritional therapists and interior designers to create the temporary Good Plates restaurant, in which every aspect was designed with positive mental wellbeing

in mind – from the food, the tableware, the décor and colour scheme to the lighting.

The menu has been created by chef and mental health ambassador Andrew Clarke, in partnership with nutritional therapist Ian Marber. When creating the menu, the pair focused on what the brain needs to remain healthy and what helps the gut.

"Diet is essential to better mental health," said Clarke.



We hope this will encourage people to think more about food

Andrew Clarke



The eatery has been designed with mental wellbeing in mind

"The menu we created uses ingredients proven to help with mental wellbeing, mood-enhancing and better brain functionality. We hope this will encourage people to

think more about food and nutrition not just for physical health, but more importantly for mental health."

More: http://lei.sr/G2e6W_H

Leisure trust introduces DNA profiling for fitness members

Leisure trust 1610 will begin offering DNA testing to members at the leisure centres it runs on behalf of local authorities across Somerset, Devon and Dorset.

The scheme is being introduced as part of

plans to offer members bespoke health and exercise programmes tailored to their personal health needs.

The DNA profiles, obtained through saliva samples, will allow 1610 health coaches to devise personalised nutrition

and exercise programmes for members, including advice on vitamins, psychology and lifestyle changes.

"We have always adopted a holistic approach to health supported by the latest cutting edge developments in the health and leisure industry," said 1610 health development manager Amanda Godsell.

"Our members will be able to make informed decisions about their own health and fitness goals as a result of the testing and gain greater understanding of how their bodies work."

1610 has partnered with DNA testing specialist Muhdo to offer the service.



Members will be able to make informed decisions

Amanda Godsell

Nathan Berkley, CEO of Muhdo, added: "DNA and epigenetics testing has the potential to help everyone from athletes to individuals wanting to get healthier."

More: http://lei.sr/r8G7f_H

DNA profiling allows the creation of personalised programmes



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Cardiorespiratory fitness is good for brain health

A study has offered new evidence of the association between cardiorespiratory fitness and brain health – particularly in the regions of the brain involved with cognitive decline and ageing.

A study from the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (GCND) – published in the *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* – has shown that cardio exercises have a positive

effect on grey matter and total brain volume.

Brain tissue is made up of grey matter, or cell bodies, and filaments, called white matter, that extend from the cells.

The volume of grey matter appears to correlate with various skills and cognitive abilities. The researchers found that increases in peak oxygen uptake (VO2 max) were strongly associated with increased grey matter.



The results are encouraging and intriguing
Ronald Petersen



Exercise may decelerate the decline in grey matter

"This provides indirect evidence that aerobic exercise can have a positive impact on cognitive function in addition to physical conditioning," said Ronald

Petersen, a Mayo Clinic neurologist. The report's findings really are both encouraging and intriguing."

More: http://lei.sr/s3u2v_H

Project to chart activity needs of families with disabled children

A three-year research project will look to provide the physical activity industry with a better understanding of the needs of families with disabled children.

The ukactive Research Institute has teamed up with

national disability charity Sense for the project, which will explore the barriers and motivations of families with disability needs. It will look at access to physical activity provision, the challenges

of families being active together, the impact on siblings with no disability and whether there are differences between community and education provision.

The research project will be divided into two phases, beginning with a consultation to understand the complex needs of families with disabled children in order to inform the development and delivery of sport and physical activity sessions, family days and other initiatives.

Following the initial research, Sense will establish an activity programme for disabled children and evaluate the impact of it on families.

"The research programme will be used to create a



We will create a programme of physical activity opportunities

Alissa Ayling

nationwide programme of sport and physical activity opportunities to help tackle the issue of inactivity," said Alissa Ayling, head of sport and physical activity at Sense.

More: http://lei.sr/W5d5S_H

The research will explore the barriers preventing participation





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Events calendar

FEBRUARY

20 | Sweat! 2020
85 Brick Lane, London, UK

.....
ukactive's annual boutique fitness event returns, with keynote speakers giving insights into the development of the market and key issues for operators and investors
www.ukactive.com/sweat

27 | CIMSPA and Quest NBS Conference 2020
East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham, UK

.....
This year's event is being held at a new venue, in the grounds of the University of Nottingham. There will be 20 sessions and keynote speeches by Tim Hollingsworth, CEO, Sport England, and behavioural change advocate David Thomson.
www.cimspa.co.uk

MARCH

5-8 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute 2020
Alexandria, VA, USA

.....
An event for personal trainers, fitness professionals, owners and managers aiming to ramp up the success of their business. Choose from 100 workshops and lectures.
www.ideafit.com/fitness-conferences

6-7 | ForumClub 2020
Palazzo del Ghiaccio, Milan, Italy

.....
Now in its 21st year, the event has separated from its twin event, ForumPiscine, and will focus on fitness, sport and wellness. The Congress programme features international speakers offering stimulating content for delegates.
www.forumclub.it

12-15 | ACSM International Health & Fitness Summit 2020
Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, GA, USA

.....
The ACSM summit features lectures that integrate the science and practice of sports medicine for the fitness professional.
www.acsm.org/acsm-summit

18-21 | IHRSA 2020
San Diego, CA, USA

.....
IHRSA 2020 will feature four influential keynote speakers, 400 trade show exhibitors and more than 100 education sessions by industry experts.
<https://hub.ihrsa.org/ihrsa-2020>



IHRSA: 400 trade show exhibitors will be represented

25-26 | Active-net 2020
Eastwood Hall, Nottingham, UK

.....
A networking event aimed at suppliers and operators with a focus on the public leisure sector. Educational seminars and a networking event take place alongside keynote presentations, development seminars and one-to-one buyer/supplier meetings.
www.active-net.org



FIBO 2020 will see the launch of an innovation stream

2-5 April 2020 | FIBO Global Fitness
Cologne, Germany

.....
FIBO is an industry summit, education programme, and fitness festival all in one. The long running event is the world's leading forum for the fitness industry and caters for both business to business and consumer attendees, welcoming over 150,000 visitors each year.

FIBO Cologne was the first fitness event launched by Reed Exhibitions. Sister FIBOs have been launched in China, Africa, South America and the US. New for 2020, will be Singapore.

HCM is a global media partner of FIBO

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TOM MOOS

The founder of Amsterdam-based boutique operator, Saints & Stars, talks to Kate Cracknell about new studio and class concepts – and about growing up in one of the best-known families in fitness

A

business like this isn't based on spreadsheets, on business models, or on copying this and that, because you can only copy so much before the whole market gets stuck," says Tom Moos, founder of boutique fitness operation Saints & Stars. "The only way to build a business like this is to do what you love, focus on what you can be really good at, and then put your whole soul into it.

"I'm not the sort of guy who's going to stand there and say 'we're the best' and that we're not going to look at what others are doing," he says. "I'm always there to learn, and I know how important it is to be flexible and adapt to the market; our target group like to constantly change things up, so we have to be ready to move quickly at all times. However, we won't simply copy others. We will always have our own flavour around we do at Saints & Stars, because a copy job will never, ever work."

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

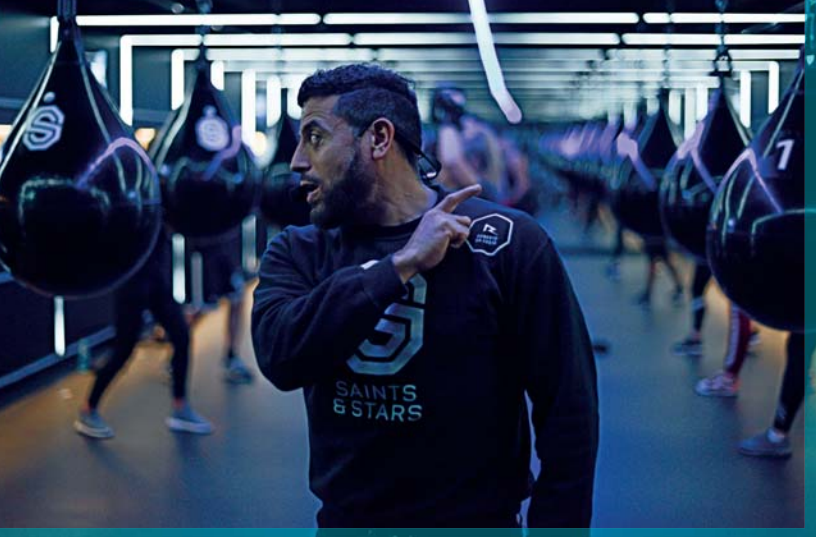
True to his word, Saints & Stars – which launched its first studio in summer 2018 in a "trendy neighbourhood of Amsterdam" – is more than just a name. It's a philosophy that's unique to the Saints & Stars business.

Moos explains: "Our members are our Saints, the people we're there to take care of. Our trainers are our Stars. But underpinning this is a focus on two words across everything we do: totality and belief. Totality is about delivering everything to the



Tom Moos launched
Saints & Stars in
Amsterdam in 2018





- highest possible standard. Belief is about being so much more than just a place to work out.

"When our Saints and Stars come together, they create a total experience based on a belief in something greater than fitness alone."

The club design, too, comes with a Saints & Stars hallmark. "I like owning one specific style. I didn't want to be the next 'industrial chic' boutique," says Moos. "So, we teamed up with one of the most famous interior designers in the Netherlands to focus on a New York glamour look. We use a lot of natural materials. A lot of marble. It's comparable

to a really high-end hotel. We didn't want it to look, feel or smell like a regular gym – it needed to be way more than that.

"Then, once you step into the studio, it's a nightclub feel, created in collaboration with an experienced nightclub specialist."

The programming too, while at face value adopting familiar formats – Holy Box is a boxing-inspired workout, Holy Shred a HIIT-inspired workout, and there's a PT studio too – has been designed to have a distinctive, signature feel. "Everything we do is formatted, with fully structured workouts based on

The Saints & Stars club is designed to feel like both a high-end hotel and a night club



maximising results and safety," says Moos. "It ensures you get the same experience each and every time. The only difference in each class is the trainer's personality."

"I believe this is a real strength for us. Our training philosophy is absolutely on-point, designed by specialists in their field – running experts and so on – and we don't leave anything to the individual trainers in terms of the programmes themselves."

"We even give our trainers the cues and the phrases we want them to use, and they're all coached regularly: we have mandatory

meetings every week where we continue their education, focusing not only on the 'what' but also the 'why'. Our Academy is probably the thing I'm most proud of in the whole business."

"We have a voice specialist, too," adds Moos, "who coaches our trainers in using their voice, changing tone and pitch and emotion to maximise the workout experience and effectiveness. That's been incredibly valuable."

CREATING A TRIBE

On the theme of trainers, Moos continues:

"One great thing about being part of a bigger ►

The boxing-inspired workout, Holy Box, is formatted to maximise results



► group with a strong history in the sector: we already knew all the best instructors, and we have them all as trainers at Saints & Stars.

"We have 14 rockstar instructors, all freelance but all working for us on an exclusive basis, and haven't lost a single one of them since we opened. We pay them well – they can earn €100+ for a full class. But even more important than that, they all feel involved in the business. They have a say in what we do and what the brand becomes."

And how is the brand evolving? "It's going really well for us right now, with our second studio opening this month in arguably an even better location than the first.

"Ideally, I'd like every new Saints & Stars to offer the same workouts, so we can create the same feeling and people know what to expect. However, it's so hard to find great locations, so you always have to be creative with them. For example, this second site is even bigger than the first, which means our Box and Shred studios can be bigger – a maximum of 50 people per class, rather than the 40 we can cater for in our first site, which isn't enough."

Interestingly, however, the lounge space in the new club will be smaller this time around. "People don't actually like space," explains Moos. "They want to be close to each other. They want to be in contact with each other.

Moos is opening a second site this month, also in Amsterdam, which is bigger than the first

WE HAVE 14 ROCKSTAR INSTRUCTORS, ALL FREELANCE BUT ALL WORKING FOR US ON AN EXCLUSIVE BASIS, AND HAVEN'T LOST A SINGLE ONE OF THEM SINCE WE OPENED. WE PAY THEM WELL – THEY CAN EARN €100+ FOR A FULL CLASS. BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT, THEY ALL FEEL INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS

A FAMILY AFFAIR

For any readers not aware, let's mention the elephant in the room: Tom is indeed the son of Rene Moos, founder and CEO of low-cost megabrand Basic-Fit. He laughs when I suggest he is, to all intents and purposes, fitness royalty, but acknowledges that his family background has significantly shaped him.

"Dad founded his first club, under the HealthCity brand, when I was about eight years old. It was located in the small town where we lived. In fact, we were actually living within the club! We didn't have any neighbours or many local friends, so as a young kid I spent lots of time in the gym and dance facility.

"I witnessed HealthCity grow from one to many clubs and got involved in the business from a relatively young age. We all did: my mum was in charge of childcare at the clubs, and was part of the group exercise team. And I developed a love for all things fitness."

He continues: "While studying international business administration – both in Amsterdam and San Diego, US – I spent time working for the likes of 24Hour Fitness and GoodLife Fitness. By the time I finished my Masters, I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to come back to the Netherlands and take on the club manager role within HealthCity's largest and toughest club, located just outside of Amsterdam. But I wanted to do it in such a way that I was doing my own thing inside of the company.

"By this point, Basic-Fit had already been established and was my dad's primary focus, but we did still own a number of HealthCity clubs. And what we did was we split this club from the rest of the estate and treated it like a standalone club, so I could implement the business plan I'd developed for my own club.

"We transformed the PT model and the group exercise model, bringing across things I'd seen in the US. For personal training, that meant standardising things much more, so all of the PTs in the club had the same education, the same philosophy, the same sales approach. For group exercise, it meant introducing club-in-a-club, boutique-style concepts.

"And we took huge steps forward with the business. During the two years I was in that role, we grew EBITDA by a multiple of four



Tom's father, Rene Moos, is the founder of HealthCity and Basic-Fit

or five. We hit 60 per cent of all new members sitting down with a PT. At that point, I became regional head, implementing the model across the remainder of our Dutch HealthCity clubs, and I still hold that role today, alongside my work with Saints & Stars. We now have 10 HealthCity clubs in the Netherlands, which we will keep, plus six in Germany which we will be selling."

The one brand he has steered away from involvement in is Basic-Fit. "I mean, of course I hear a lot about it. Whenever I sit down with my dad and my younger brother – who is involved in Basic-Fit – we talk about it. That's probably every couple of weeks. But we all believe in keeping things separate. Other than accounting, HR and our service centre, all our brands operate totally independently, and while the overall group has invested in Saints & Stars, it has to deliver as a separate profit centre.

"That works for me, because I really like working in a high-end service industry, giving people that something extra. I'm very passionate about Saints & Stars and am in it for the long run."

SAINTS & STARS IN NUMBERS

Clubs: One (1,200sq m), with a second opening this month

Classes per week: 140 at site #1

Average class capacity: 82 per cent

Average member satisfaction score: 9.2/10

Target market: 25- to 40-year-olds

Percentage of users taking membership: 10-15 per cent

Membership prices: €129 for four weeks / €109 a month on an annual contract, otherwise €20 PAYG or a class pack

Secondary revenue streams: 12-15 per cent of overall revenues come from juices, waters, bars. "Apparel hasn't taken off yet though. We hoped it would be as big for us as it is for Barry's Bootcamp, but it seems – and not just for us, but across other brands too – the appetite just isn't there in Europe as it is in the US!"

The bigger the space, the smaller the sense of community," Moos observes.

He continues: "We'll also include a new concept – a strength-based workout, inspired by the likes of Tone House in the US, which we're calling Holy Build.

"Holy Build will be available only to our Gold members – those who have signed up for full membership, which is currently around 10-15 per cent of our user base – and those on bigger packages. It won't be a huge revenue generator, as the class will cater for a maximum of 16 people, but I do see it as a big retention driver and sales driver for our memberships. It will give people a reason to commit to us, giving them all they need in the one studio – Holy Build is the perfect complement to the HIIT of our other concepts – as well as offering them something they can only get as a member.

"We therefore plan to retrofit Holy Build into our first site too, in the PT studio space. There will still be personal training – we have an excellent philosophy based on personalisation and long-term results – but if ▶



- I'm really honest we haven't quite cracked the delivery model yet. If we hit 20 per cent of new members booking a PT, we're doing well."

A FOCUSED MODEL

Moos continues: "We're already looking for our third and fourth locations, also in Amsterdam; across all of our brands, we always expand city by city, adopting a cluster strategy. I'd like to be up to four sites open by the end of 2020.

"At that point, we might look to Rotterdam and The Hague, which are probably the only other cities in the Netherlands that are close to being ready for this sort of concept. That said, if I had to predict now what's likely to happen – and of course this changes all the

time – I'd guess we're more likely to expand internationally first, perhaps to France or Spain. Really it depends how quickly Rotterdam and The Hague internationalise and get fully into the boutique mindset."

Is there any likelihood of Saints & Stars also following the lead of 1Rebel and Rumble and developing a digital offering? "A lot of brands are jumping on this at the moment. Would we do it? I think, for now, the answer would be 'no'. We can only focus on so much and I don't want to divert attention away from building really nice clubs. I'd rather be really good at one thing.

"And to do digital well, you do need huge resources. Basic-Fit has a dedicated production facility – a couple of thousand square

Moos says aggregators have been a positive for Saints & Stars, simulating the market

■ CLASSPASS: FRIEND, NOT FOE

"I was always against the idea of working with aggregators, but my opinion changed when ClassPass took more of an aggressive stance," explains Moos.

"With other aggregator models, it doesn't matter what studio you are, the consumer pays one price and can work out wherever they choose. I hate that model, because I perceive us as being at the top of the market.

"What I really like about the ClassPass model is that it differentiates between boutique clubs. We're allowed to be more

expensive, and that perceived value is really important for us.

"So, the ClassPass partnership has been really good. They have been really good to us and I'm definitely not against aggregators these days. I think they actually stimulate and activate the market more and more.

"All that said, there are some things we will always hold back from ClassPass, that you can only get if you come direct to us. Our new class concept Holy Build is one of those."

The 'Look Better Naked' campaign saw 30 completely naked people sent out onto the streets of Amsterdam

SAINTS-STARS.COM

LOOK BETTER NAKED



SAINTS  STARS
NEXT LEVEL GYM

SAINTS & STARS: MAKING A SPLASH

As one of the first boutique fitness operations in Amsterdam, Saints & Stars not only had to make a name for itself – it also had to raise awareness of this style of working out among the 25- to 40-year-old target market.

Moos explains: "We have tried huge billboards around the city. The verdict: expensive and ineffective, at least for our brand. Our audience is already so used to this traditional way of advertising. You have to do something really different if you want to stand out."

Saints & Stars has therefore focused on high-impact guerilla campaigns with strong PR-ability. Moos explains: "We have to be creative, to think outside the box each and every time. For social media in particular, it needs to be crazy, sexy or funny – and ideally all three."

'Cross the Line' was the brand's launch campaign. "We were the gym that literally crossed all lines. Everything we did, we pushed it just that little bit further," says Moos. The tagline resonated exceedingly well with the target market, who took the line-crossing concept into their own social posts and helped Saints & Stars hit the ground running with, says Moos, "huge marketing and brand awareness in the first couple of months."

In 2018, **Look Better Naked** saw 30 completely naked individuals of all shapes and sizes being sent out onto the streets of Amsterdam. "The message was primarily that you need to be proud of your own body," says Moos.

And then came **We Crush Excuses**, one of the brand's more recent campaigns, which saw branded limousines cruising around Amsterdam, taking workouts to people wherever they were. "We crushed every possible excuse," says Moos. "I don't have time. It's raining. I don't have an outfit. I'm hungry. I'm hung over. It didn't matter. We picked them up, drove them to their workout, had an entire clothing line inside our Hummer ready for them to use, provided a buffet they could help themselves to, had our own music installation and our two master trainers to deliver the workouts. That was a really nice campaign."

This thought-provoking approach to marketing is securing high levels of engagement among social media influencers. "We work with a lot of influencers and Dutch celebrities, none of whom we pay," confirms Moos. "We create a personalised experience for them, yes – so we invest our time – but ultimately we just make sure we work with those who genuinely love fitness and our brand. Especially among the generation we're talking to, people know when something isn't real."

Adding to the 'keeping it real' vibe, there are also quarterly themes – Q1 2020 is about the environment – that tap in to "things that matter to people". Moos adds: "At a boutique club, you really know who your audience is. It makes everything easier, from hiring trainers to creating targeted marketing emails. We know who we are and who our members are: where they like to go out, what they like to read, what they want to hear about from us... It's great."



- metres – and seeing how much money, time and knowledge they invest in it... It's just too much for us at the moment."

MEASURING SUCCESS

So, beyond opening new sites, how does Moos judge the success of his Saints & Stars brand?

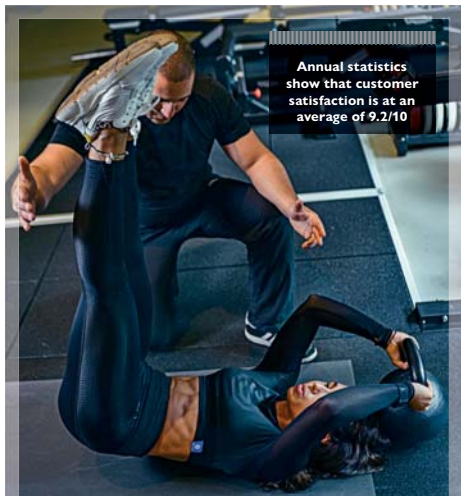
"My main KPI is that the people who work for us – our trainers, but also our other staff – are extremely happy and proud of the brand."

"Flowing from that, it's about ensuring our customer satisfaction scores are through the roof, and I'm proud to say our annual stats show an average 9.2/10 rating and 82 per cent class capacity. Anything that doesn't hit at least 75 per cent capacity, we kick off the timetable."

"We do a lot of surveys, as well as in-depth interviews, to ensure we maintain these satisfaction scores. The first time someone visits, the wow factor means they pretty much always score us 10/10, so there's no point interviewing first-timers – we don't learn anything. It's when we speak to our really loyal members – only then do we know what could be better, what was lacking on a particular day or week, what individual trainers might improve on. We make sure we act on that."

"It's about adapting and staying flexible, to ensure people want to keep coming back." ●

Watch out next issue for insights into Basic-Fit from CEO, Rene Moos



Annual statistics show that customer satisfaction is at an average of 9.2/10



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Mintel says record numbers of people have health club memberships



INSIGHTS & ISSUES

New research from Mintel reveals private health and fitness clubs had a record breaking year in 2019. Mintel's Lauren Ryan gives us the highlights



According to new research from Mintel, the number of people in the UK with a private gym membership has risen by 15 per cent over the past five years – from 5.3 million in 2014 to 6.1 million in 2019.

The *UK Health And Fitness Clubs Market Report* found increases over the past 12 months helped grow the total revenue registered by private health and fitness clubs to nearly £3.4bn during 2019 – an increase of 4.1 per cent on 2018.

“The rise of lower-cost options and increased number of locations has made

private gyms an accessible form of leisure, while a greater focus by consumers on healthier living and exercise is also providing a boost to the sector,” says Lauren Ryan, Mintel leisure analyst.

“The convenience of more options close to work and home, with more flexible off-peak options available from the leading brands, has boosted demand, while competition has driven prices down.

“However, while membership numbers will continue to increase, competition will drive down average fees and limit revenue growth over the next five years.”

Fitness instructors play a key role in how much consumers like a particular health club

7 TIPS FOR MARKET GROWTH

Mintel gives top tips for how to thrive in the fast growing fitness market

1

COMPETE FOR THE BEST PTS

With many personal trainers paying rent to train clients in the gym, it can be difficult to keep hold of the best talent.

According to Mintel, the importance of PTs themselves is confirmed by the 75 per cent of people who say the instructors play a key role in how much they like a club. Offering more fixed-term salaries or even profit share or equity options could motivate the highest-quality trainers to stay with the club.

2

OFFER GREAT CLASSES

Varied classes and friendly, passionate instructors are vital for boosting attendance in gyms. Mintel found that classes are a key reason for many people using health and fitness clubs, with 58 per cent saying they're the main reason they attend.

The rising competition from other fitness options is also placing increased pressure on delivering quality classes.

Best practice in this area includes timetabling class options clearly and avoiding cancelling classes and offering a wide variety of classes for all levels of fitness and friendly instructors who can build a rapport with members.

3

BE INCLUSIVE

Some people are put off joining a gym due to perceiving their fitness

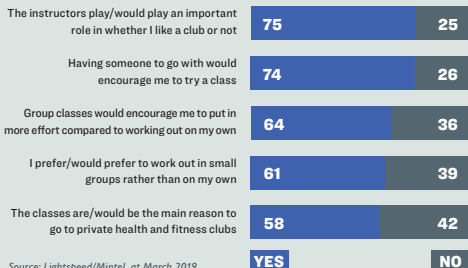
levels to be too low, or concern over their appearance. It's vital that gyms show there are classes for everyone, from the more sociable, fun fitness classes to the more intensive workouts aimed at those people who have been attending the gym, or working out, for some time.

People are likely to be put off if they're struggling to keep up with a class or routine. Providing a scale, which shows the experience and fitness levels that are required to undertake certain types of exercises, can help members to gauge the most appropriate classes for them, which in turn will keep them motivated.



■ ATTITUDES TOWARDS HEALTH & FITNESS CLUB CLASSES

"Do the following statements about private health and fitness clubs apply to you?"



Source: Lightspeed/Mintel, at March 2019

Fifty-eight per cent of people say classes are the main reason they go to a health club

5

GIVE FEEDBACK

Too often people have been left to their own devices in health and fitness clubs, with little interaction after induction and brief tours of facilities. With low-cost gyms dominating the market, this has happened more, with many locations operating 24 hours a day and often having few staff or instructors present.

However, to boost membership and attendance, and counter the threat from online and app-based workouts, health and fitness clubs must focus on performance monitoring and feedback. There's a clear demand for this, as 72 per cent of people would prefer health and fitness clubs to keep them updated on their progress.

4

REMEMBER MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TOO

As highlighted by the Mintel Trend report, *Total Wellbeing*, more people are looking to treat their body as an ecosystem. This means there are opportunities for health and fitness clubs to expand their range of classes to include an emphasis on mental health.

This might include more focus on yoga and meditation, or guided mindfulness to compete with popular apps such as Headspace and Calm.

The Mintel report found that if clubs can offer a wider range of options to allow members to focus on all aspects of their health, including mind: body, people will attend more regularly and be far less likely to cancel memberships.

To get the report, go to
HCMmag.com/mintel



Offering joint memberships to friends and housemates can boost retention

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/FLANINGO IMAGES

6

ENABLE TRACKING

According to Mintel, 28 per cent of people say the ability to track their progress would make them join or attend a health club more often.

Major technology companies such as Google and Apple have pushed their own fitness apps and wearable technology to track exercise and performance. Apple continues to expand the range of gym equipment its apps and devices can sync with.

As health and fitness clubs replace and upgrade equipment, there must be a focus on technology allowing users to easily sync with their fitness apps. Otherwise, gyms risk losing members to home workout subscription services such as Peloton Digital, where data is being utilised to motivate consumers.

There's scope within brand apps to offer more workout plans, personalised routines and progress tracking. If apps are designed to sync with the club's equipment, members will be able to see all their progress and receive feedback and recommendations. This provides opportunities for new tiers of membership, with paid sections of the app for more personalisation and interaction with personal trainers. There's also the chance to reward members for progress.

7

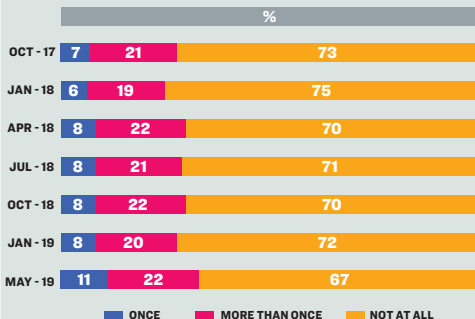
BUILD COMMUNITIES

There's an element of community and socialising missing from the majority of home workout options, fitness apps and online personal training programmes.

People are keen to visit health and fitness clubs with someone, so offering joint memberships to friends and housemates encourages this. With many new locations opening and many using a franchising model, there's a chance to build more of a presence in local communities, by becoming involved with local organisations and ultimately boosting membership and retention.

■ USE OF GYMS/LEISURE CENTRES IN THE PAST MONTH

*"How often have you done the following leisure activities in the past month?
– Gone to a gym/leisure centre."*



Source: Lightspeed/Mintel, October 2017 - May 2019

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VIVEFITNESS THE FOUNDER'S STORY

HCM talks to Fraser Smith about founding his studio and why he picked
miha bodytec as his supplier and EMS training for his USP

ViveFitness is the latest EMS (Electro Muscle Stimulation) training facility to open in the UK. Perfectly positioned in the buzzing city of Westminster, London, the studio aims to capitalise on the high footfall of busy working professionals, seeking an effective and time-efficient solution to keep on top of their health and fitness goals.

Fraser Smith is the co-founder and COO of ViveFitness. With a longstanding career in the fitness industry, Smith knows the key to attracting new members, providing a results-driven service and creating an enjoyable experience for which people will continue to return.

In light of the launch of ViveFitness, we caught up with Smith to understand more about his background, the opportunities he sees with EMS and where he wants to take his business.

Tell us about your history in the fitness industry

I've been fortunate enough to work with some great fitness professionals over the years. I started my career in Premier League Football, with a highly enjoyable and successful spell with Blackburn Rovers. I then moved into International Football with the Welsh FA, before starting my fitness business in London.

I've since enjoyed mentoring new trainers and working with a variety of individuals with a wide range of fitness goals, ranging from the general to the highly specific. These include stars from West End musicals, actors, world champion athletes and those recovering from injury. With the foundations of sport science and nutrition degrees, combined with experience in professional sport, I've been lucky enough to receive great exposure to most forms of training modalities on the market.

When did you hear about EMS and what were your thoughts?

I first heard about EMS when I was in China. Initially, I was sceptical, yet intrigued – it's definitely something you can't get your head around just by watching it.

After some in-depth research, and more importantly, giving it a go for myself, it made instant sense in terms of the efficiency, the effectiveness and the science behind it all.

I started to explore the market, discovering who the training was aimed at and saw the opportunity to bring a unique form of fitness to the masses. I knew it had great business potential.

What about EMS inspired you to set up ViveFitness?

It's always been a dream of mine to set up my own fitness business. To have the creative input to grow my own company provides a thrilling challenge.



"For the trainer, EMS allows you to use a focused approach. You can target specific areas for development, knowing that the users' muscles are working hard throughout"

Fraser Smith

For me, the most important focus is to create a fitness environment where members benefit from both the training and the whole experience. EMS makes that simple. The miha bodytec device provides a time-efficient and safe training experience for those that don't have the time or desire to exercise in a loud and hectic gym.

As sessions are run in a bespoke, personalised training environment, the whole experience is far less intimidating and more enjoyable.

What's more, whilst the EMS market is growing in the UK, there are currently few providers offering the service. It's a great solution to stand out as a studio, offering something different to members. It gives us a strong USP.

What are the benefits of EMS training for you as a trainer and also for your clients?

The benefits of EMS for the user are well established. Numerous scientific research papers show that training with an EMS stimulus increases the percentage of muscles stimulated, and the velocity at which they're stimulated, thus improving strength and tone. It also shows a reduction in lower back pain, increased lean mass and reduced joint pain. It's an efficient way to help clients achieve their goals faster.

For the trainer, EMS allows you to use a focused approach. You can target

specific areas for development, knowing that the users' muscles are working hard throughout the session.

What sort of clients are you looking to attract to ViveFitness?

EMS is for everyone! This is something we promote at ViveFitness. The key is in understanding the needs of each member.

Whether it be weight loss and toning, or elite sports performance, EMS has a place in everyone's training plan. It can be used as a standalone workout or incorporated into a weekly programme.

Athletes or regular gym users will also get numerous benefits from EMS training alongside other forms of fitness.

Are you planning to offer any further services at ViveFitness?

At ViveFitness it is all about the experience. We've thoughtfully designed the studio to ensure members enjoy their time with us from entrance to exit.

We provide all equipment and clothing on site, with high quality amenities, towels, shower facilities and selected nutritional supplements for all our members. I've been fortunate to build a great team of experienced trainers and friendly staff here too.

We'll also be offering nutritional advice in order to maximise results. Whether you train to lose weight, gain mass,

or as part of living a healthy lifestyle, understanding the benefits of correct nutrition are essential.

Long-term, the plan is to have an on-site physiotherapist. EMS is widely used by my colleagues in professional sport as part of rehab processes for athletes and this is a service we want to bring to the general public as well.

What are your goals for the future with ViveFitness?

I have high ambitions for ViveFitness. I want us to be available to everyone, so we plan to expand. However, we won't get ahead of ourselves. Our focus is to maximise what we offer to our members here at our flagship studio in Westminster, then push on with plans to grow.

We're really excited about the journey ahead and are looking forward to welcoming all comers to ViveFitness.

■ If you're looking for more information about ViveFitness or want to understand more about EMS training and the opportunities available within your business, visit the website below.

mihabodytec

TEL: +44 (0)208 0680780

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Fraser Smith takes clients through an EMS workout at ViveFitness



Private sector health and fitness clubs have maintained strong performance over the past two years

THE NUMBERS ARE IN

Kristen Walsh takes a look inside IHRSA's

latest *Profiles of Success* report

IHRSA has released its annual *Industry Data Survey* (IDS) results and the accompanying publication, *2019 IHRSA Profiles of Success*. The report provides a detailed analysis of the annual performance of US private sector health and fitness clubs in areas such as revenue, membership growth and retention, traffic, payroll, non-dues revenue and EBITDA.

"*2019 Profiles of Success* shows US clubs have maintained strong performance over the past two years," says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive VP of global products. "Overall, clubs reported favourable indicators in revenue, membership, and operations. The report provides benchmarks for club operators to compare their performance against, along with analyses by club type and size."

PROFIT CENTRE ANALYSIS

Multipurpose clubs reported that 7.7 per cent of total revenues are coming from PT services, 5.7 per cent from racquet sports, 4.3 per cent from spa services, 3.9 per cent from F&B, and 1.9 per cent from children and youth programmes. ►

- For fitness-only clubs, fitness offerings accounted for a large portion of non-dues revenues, with PT accounting for 15.5 per cent of total revenues.

Although fitness-only clubs and multipurpose clubs can operate similar department/profit centres, profit margins for the various departments vary depending on how the department is operated. For example, some multipurpose clubs operate these departments more as a volume business or as value-adds to their core membership. They may even operate some as loss leaders to differentiate their clubs as an experience, rather than simply a destination.

CHANGE BY MONTH

As consumers set health and fitness resolutions in the new year, member accounts added versus those accounts dropped are significantly higher from January to March and in 2017-18, the difference in percentage added versus the percentage dropped in January was positive and the largest it has been in the last five years.



Overall, clubs reported favourable indicators in revenue, membership, and operations

Jay Ablondi, IHRSA

July and August are typically months in which the number of dropped accounts outpace the number of accounts added. Respondents also reported a higher percentage of dropped accounts in September and October, but November and December reported a higher positive percentage.

RETENTION AND VISITS

Clubs in the sample reported slightly lower retention rates, but still managed to retain nearly seven out of 10 members in 2018.

This varied by club type and club size. Multipurpose clubs reported a stronger membership retention rate when compared to fitness-only clubs (73.9 per cent, versus 58.4 per cent) and independent clubs reported a significantly higher membership retention rate compared to clubs that are part of a multi-club group or chain (75.8 per cent, versus 62.3 per cent).

When analysed based on the size of the clubs, those with 60,000sq ft or more reported the highest member retention rate at 76.3 per cent.

In 2018, all clubs reported a median of 57 visits per member per year, up slightly from the 54 visits reported for 2017.

Multipurpose clubs and fitness-only clubs reported 55 and 61 visits per member, respectively. Clubs that are part of a multi-club group or chain reported 56 visits per member versus 57 visits per member at independent clubs.

10 KEY FINDINGS

1

REVENUE

Responding clubs reported a median revenue growth of **4.3 per cent** between 2017 and 2018, though the figure varied by club type. Facilities that were part of a chain reported greater revenue growth (**+7.1 per cent**) than independents (**+3 per cent**)



2

RETENTION

Overall, respondents indicated a median retention rate of **65.8 per cent**. Independents managed **73.2 per cent**, while clubs that were part of a chain posted a **62.3 per cent** rate



3

REVENUE PER MEMBER

The median annual revenue per member was **US\$754**. The figure for the large-club segment (60,000sq ft and over) was **US\$1,135**, while, for the smallest clubs (under 20,000sq ft), it was **\$523**



4

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

The month of January produced the highest percentage (**10.3 per cent**) of all new accounts acquired during the year. December, at **9.1 per cent**, wasn't too far behind



5

MEMBERSHIP COSTS

Median sales and marketing costs per member were **US\$123.59** – a **20.4 per cent** increase over the previous year, when clubs spent **US\$102.61**



Clubs with 35,000-59,999sq ft reported only 52 visits per member while clubs with over 60,000sq ft reported 59 visits per member.

NET MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Net membership growth was mixed across the numerous reporting segments, but the overall trend was that of continued growth – albeit at a slower pace than 2017.

Overall, clubs in this sample reported membership gains of 2.7 per cent between 2017 and 2018. Fitness-only clubs experienced higher membership growth than the multipurpose clubs, growing at 2.2 per cent in 2018, against 1.7 per cent in 2017.

It's important to bear in mind that some of this change is due to results from smaller-scale fitness-only clubs, where a small increase in number of members has a greater impact from a percentage point of view.

Smaller clubs with less than 20,000sq ft reported the highest percentage increase in the total number of members added in 2018, at 11.5 per cent.

While a constant stream of new members is the lifeblood of a health club, the number of new accounts is also an important metric. IHRSA defined membership accounts in this



Small group training was the most profitable area for clubs in 2018

year's survey to include both family and individual memberships.

The typical chain club added 810 accounts over 2018. The typical independent club, on the other hand, added 1,000 accounts. When comparing clubs by type, multipurpose clubs added more accounts than smaller, fitness-only clubs. The typical multipurpose club added 1,031 accounts last year, while the typical fitness-only clubs added 648 accounts.

In 2018, all types of clubs were about even in terms of account replacement. The member account replacement ratio for 2018 was nearly 1.07, meaning that for every 107 accounts sold, 100

accounts closed. This metric is worth monitoring, as this is a drop when compared to 2017.

Additionally, this is below the range logged in recent years of 1.10 to 1.20. For context, this ratio was 1.29 pre-2009. ●

■ GET THE REPORT

The 2019 IHRSA Profiles of Success is available for purchase at ihrsa.org/profiles or via email to store@ihrsa.org

US\$249.95 for IHRSA members, US\$499.95 for non-members.



6

LABOUR COSTS

Clubs, overall, spent **41.9 per cent** of total revenue on payroll. Multipurpose clubs spent **44.5 per cent**, and fitness-only facilities spent **34.1 per cent**

7

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Clubs, overall, reported reinvesting a median of **5.6 per cent** of total revenue (US\$284,000) in their business. A median of **1.3 per cent** of total revenue (US\$66,795) was spent on fitness equipment

8

NON-MEMBERSHIP REVENUE

Of the seven profit centres analysed, personal training was top with respect to sales volume, producing **8.3 per cent** of total revenue in 2018

9

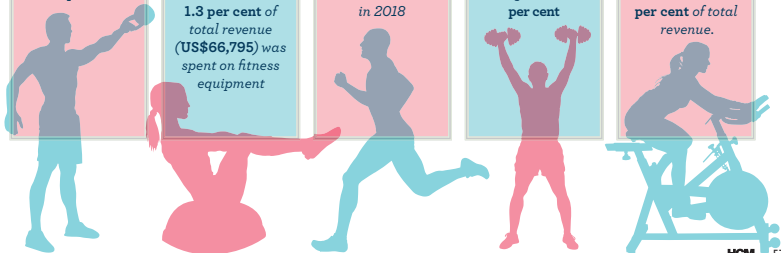
PROFITABILITY

Small-group training (SGT) was the most profitable department among the seven profit centres analysed, producing a margin of **43.7 per cent**

10

FACILITY COSTS

Approximately **8.5 per cent** of total revenue was allocated to building expenses and land rental. Real estate and property taxes consumed a median of **1.8 per cent** of total revenue.





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Did you know?
It costs 9x as much to acquire a new member as it does to retain an existing one? And increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25-95%?
- Harvard Business Review



Scan QR code to learn more



Amplifying excellence

Steve Mellor, owner of AMP Athletic, has installed Myzone to drive his business. We find out how it's enabling him to deliver great service to his members

In recent years, group training and HIIT have both landed in the top three fitness trends for the year. Why? More and more people are exercising and are craving the sophistication of a studio without losing the attention, care, and community of small group training.

Training gyms have already driven great success throughout the United States, but the vision and possibility is only now taking off in the UK.

HIGH END SERVICE

Steve Mellor, owner of AMP Athletic, says the customer journey of his members is at the heart of his mission. Mellor is redefining the standard for a successful training gym by combining attention to detail that achieves the levels seen in five-star hotels with the kind of knowledge of anatomy and exercise selection that would be found in a sports rehab operation.

"While it's brilliant to increase the number of people exercising, we have to remember that HIIT should not be the cornerstone of what you do", he says. "We, as an industry, must get people moving well and moving often before adding speed and complexity to any movement that they carry out."

"We do this day in and day out at AMP and our members love the journey they embark on. We 'start simple' and only then do we progress at a speed relevant to that person," says Mellor.

There's an increasing appetite for clubs to provide a high-end service coupled with high end prices. AMP Athletic attributes a great deal of its success to its



AMP Athletic is using Myzone to deliver optimum levels of intensity



"For us, Myzone is the perfect coaching tool when we talk about intensity"

Steven Mellor
AMP Athletic

staff who understand the importance of going the extra mile, paired with the tools of a wearable tech strategy that provides that personal touch members have come to expect.

"Myzone is a piece of tech you can install in your club and benefit from instantly," says Mellor. "For us, Myzone is the perfect coaching tool when we talk about intensity. It helps conceptualise the rate of both actual and perceived work to a member very easily, while also giving the coaches a way to make sure they're pushing people to the right level at different times during the workout."

"We love Myzone and wouldn't exist without it," he says. Like many things, opening a gym and immediately installing

a tech strategy like Myzone is great, but ensuring the strategy and the brand continue to thrive takes consistent effort. AMP Athletic is defined by all the hard work and community the members and staff work at tirelessly together.

With the right atmosphere and a commitment to achieving fitness goals, people are naturally motivated by each other. As a result, AMP has had a phenomenal first year and with three new facilities on the horizon, they're on the fast track to helping people live a healthier, more active lifestyle.

To find out more, visit:
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DESIGN

THIRD SPACE ISLINGTON

Third Space sold its boutique brand, Another Space, and launched its sixth full-service club in the space of a few weeks, signalling its intention to consolidate its position at the top end of the market

The main pool at Third Space Islington. The club also has a children's pool to enable adults and younger members to enjoy their own spaces



***We did 300 doorstep interviews
and focus groups in Islington to
make sure our concept was right***

Colin Waggett, CEO, Third Space

High-end operator, Third Space, has opened its sixth full-service club in Islington, London. The £10m, basement club covers 47,000sq ft and is the largest health club to open in London for more than 10 years.

The property was developed by Cain International, and is located in Islington Square, a £400m mixed-use redevelopment of the former North London Royal Mail centre. The scheme also has 263 new homes ranging in price from £715,000 up to £1.79m, 108 serviced apartments, retail and leisure facilities.

At the heart of the club is a 7,000sq ft "arena space" for flexible training, featuring a custom-built running track, dedicated strength training area and performance cardio area with Myzone heart-rate connectivity.

The club's bespoke functional training rig was supplied by EXF Fitness and incorporates a boxing bag rail with four bags and monkey bars. As the club is at basement level, a bespoke rig was required due to height limitations.

In the strength area, Pulse Fitness has supplied 15 stations from its H Range Strength Line, with all equipment being created in a bespoke sand black and completed with Third Space branding to reflect the sleek aesthetic of the club. The gym also features the new Wattbike Atom X.

Wet areas include a six-lane, 20m swimming pool as well as a spa with saunas, a whirlpool bath and streamrooms.

In addition, the club houses an indoor cycling amphitheatre – with unique light displays and soundtracks designed for each class. Bikes have been organised in tiered rows to provide every rider a good view, while industrial turbines have been installed to create "headwinds".

The club's studios will offer more than 100 group classes a week, while personal training will also be a big focus.

One of the club's USPs is the hot yoga studio, which is the first in Europe to use infrared-mirrored panels to create a range of temperatures suited to each class. ▶



Third Space Islington offers more than 100 group classes every week

- There's also a lounge, designed for pre- or post-workouts, where purpose-built 'quiet rooms' have been equipped with guided meditation for mind and body and. A medical and nutritional suite will offer customised programmes.

THE FIRST LITTLE SPACE

As well as premium club facilities for adults, Third Space Islington Square incorporates Little Space – a separate, dedicated kids' club and a new departure for the operator.

Little Space has its own shallow training pool, a mini sports hall, kid's dance studio, climbing area, athletic rig and restaurant. It offers a range of exercise classes for children, as well as family play sessions and swimming lessons.

Speaking about the concept, Third Space CEO Colin Waggett told *HCM*: "Little Space is a good example of us looking at each new market and really asking: 'What do people here really want?' Before we go forward.

"We did 300 doorstep interviews and focus groups in Islington to make sure our concept was right.

"What we didn't want was for this to become a family club, mixing the two sides of the offering and possibly ending up with something that wasn't the best of either world.

"This is why we've kept things separate: the Third Space adults experience is entirely unaffected and still best-in-class in terms of offering a grown-up environment, while Little Space is free to specialise in kids' facilities and programming."

According to Rob Beale, fitness director for Third Space, the Islington club has its own identity, but the design is in line with the Third Space ethos of "providing the inspiration and motivation to exercise".

"When designing a new space, we have a very specific vision of how we want a club to look," he says.

"It needs to have its own unique identity while staying in keeping with the aesthetic of the Third Space family." ●



The club's luxe, minimal design gives the spaces their own identity, while still being in keeping with the Third Space aesthetic



Above/right, the gym includes a custom rig from EXF, made to fit the basement location. Below, the rowing area was fitted by Concept 2



The cycling studio has custom-designed lighting and sound systems, as well as industrial turbines to create a headwind





A modern, futuristic gym interior. The room is dimly lit, with bright blue neon light strips running along the ceiling and walls, creating a high-tech atmosphere. Several stationary exercise bikes are arranged in rows on a raised platform. The bikes are black with blue and red accents. In the background, a dark wall features a sign that reads "SPACE". The floor is dark and reflective, with small lights embedded in it. The overall design is sleek and contemporary.

SPACE

Lightwells in Third Space Islington belie its basement location

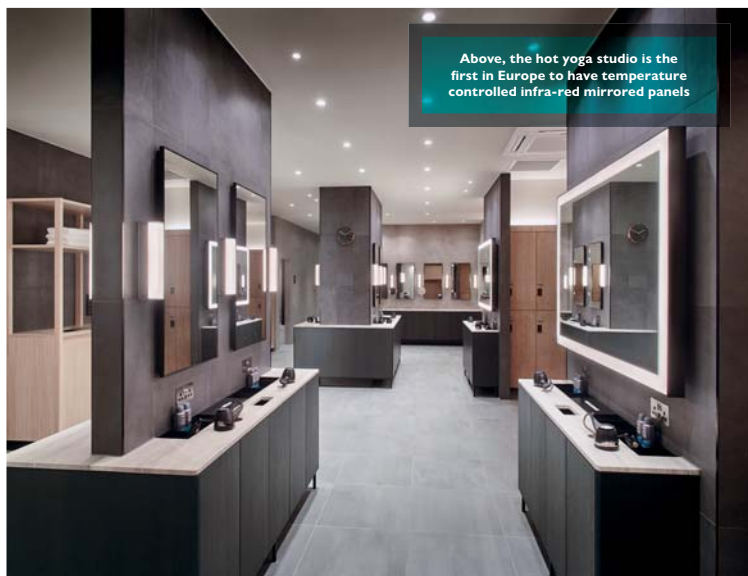


Left: the spa offers a range of hot and cold experiences while Little Space (below) has a sophisticated play area and studio as part of its mix





Above, the hot yoga studio is the first in Europe to have temperature controlled infra-red mirrored panels



ABBEYCROFT LEISURE

Inspiring better health and wellbeing for Suffolk communities

Legend's technology and software support state-of-the-art facilities, customer experience and community engagement

Abbeycroft Leisure has a vision to inspire healthier, active communities through excellent facilities, cutting-edge experiences and strong partnerships.

The social enterprise serves 13 Suffolk communities, managing 18 facilities, including West Suffolk Council and Babergh District Council leisure provision, while being a trusted partner to NHS West Suffolk CCG, Suffolk Mind and Allied Health Professionals Suffolk.

In line with its strategic vision, the trust launched an innovative customer experience-focused self-service model, at the Haverhill Leisure Centre. The goal was to transform the site to self-service, implement automated payments and a near-cashless reception, plus introduce customer hosts to focus on high quality customer engagement around health

and wellbeing. The site would act as the trust's exemplar site; an aspirational model that Abbeycroft could roll out across its other centres.

Karen Points, strategic director, Abbeycroft Leisure, comments: "As a not-for-profit social enterprise, financial surplus is re-invested into our services.

"We have a strong commitment to our communities, so it's vital that our services reflect their needs. We recognised our facilities needed to become even more intrinsic to communities by bringing together elements of their health, fitness and wellbeing journeys under one roof. This involved a re-engineering of how people could engage with us and technology was the enabler."

Abbeycroft turned to long-standing partner, Legend Club Management Systems, to implement changes in three phases:

PHASE 1: Introducing the New Customer Operating Model

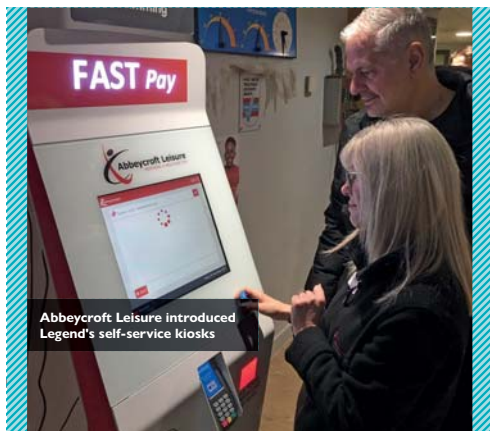
In January 2019, Haverhill Leisure Centre re-opened to customers, sporting a remodelled reception area featuring Legend's self-service Fast-Pay Kiosks instead of traditional reception desks. On these kiosks, customers can buy activities, courts, swims and ticket-based transactions using the touchscreen, which enables contactless, automated payment.

Abbeycroft then extended its use of the Legend 'One System, One Solution' platform to increase e-bookings and take payments by implementing a centralised Customer Service Call Centre.

"Our aim is to make it easy for customers to access our sites and services," says Points. "Removing barriers and inefficiencies from the customer journey by introducing automation and deploying the right technology is key."

"We also want to give staff the skills and capabilities to create more interesting roles, as this will enhance our community offer."

Abbeycroft and Legend's team worked with Haverhill staff to plan how to realise the new service, focusing on becoming customer hosts and evolving their roles into advisors, facilitating NHS studio appointments, physiotherapy and Atrial Fibrillation testing.



Abbeycroft Leisure introduced Legend's self-service kiosks



A test that identifies signs of Atrial Fibrillation is adding value to the Abbeycroft Leisure community



"We recognised our facilities needed to become even more intrinsic to communities by bringing together elements of their health, fitness and wellbeing journeys under one roof"

Karen Points, strategic director,
Abbeycroft Leisure

PHASE 2: Building the Exemplar

Over eight weeks, the team honed experiences at Haverhill, improving customer digital interactions to 68 per cent; halving the number of 'clicks' on the kiosks; improving call answering by 60 per cent; halving the number of missed calls; as well as developing and implementing a training programme for call agents and customer hosts to increase confidence.

"Getting our first site working as seamlessly as possible was key to the successful roll-out of the new customer operating model across the whole organisation," Points says. "Our aim is to achieve a channel shift to 'digital-first' for class bookings, online joining, automated payments, and to increase efficiency and productivity. This will allow us to

focus efforts on enriching community health and wellbeing."

Abbeycroft trained Haverhill staff to test customers and identify signs of Atrial Fibrillation (AF) requiring investigation. Points says, "Public Health England supported us, as statistics indicate 1,700 people in West Suffolk have undiagnosed AF. It's a simple test, which reaches more people when conducted in a leisure facility versus a medical centre."

"152 people were tested in the first week, with five referred to their GPs after showing signs of AF – a potential five strokes avoided, the co-ordinator of West Suffolk CCG has said. A tangible example of our staff having more meaningful interaction with people and adding community value."

PHASE 3: Broadening the Reach

Abbeycroft Leisure is now rolling out its new customer operating model across other sites, starting with the largest centre: Bury St Edmunds.

Call centre technology went live in December 2019, and agents were trained on sites they were not familiar with. Legend Kiosks go live this month (Feb 2020).

"Haverhill showed a direct correlation between increased kiosk use and decreased reliance on reception. We're extremely excited by this initiative," says Points. "Increasingly, leisure operators have an opportunity and duty of care to improve the health of their communities beyond the traditional 'gym' setting. This is a partnership between us, our public health bodies and Legend. It's a model that's fit for the future and which we can replicate across the UK."



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With 25 years in the leisure sector, Hall is one of Parkwood's longest-serving members of staff

GLEN HALL

In addition to being one of the UK's largest leisure management companies,

Parkwood Leisure is also a health and fitness operator at scale, with 73 gyms and over

100,000 members. MD Glen Hall tells HCM how two major reviews in recent years

have put the company on a new path

“

We want our members to love what they do when they visit our facilities,” says Glen Hall, MD of Parkwood Leisure. “We want them to feel welcome and part of a community and believe that making connections and having fun are key ingredients in happier, healthier lives.

“We all need to move more and the easiest way to do so is to enjoy the activities you partake in,” says Hall.

“Parkwood goes beyond facilities – we believe people want results, not just treadmills and weights, and our focus is on the process required to achieve the outcomes our members desire.

“Whatever their experience, lifestyle, goals, likes and dislikes, we work with them to build workouts that complement their lifestyle and ensure success,” he says.

“Our ‘member journey’ is a well-thought-out plan and process that we’ve integrated across all our sites and it’s central to members achieving their goals,” says Hall.

Parkwood’s member journey begins from the very first interaction with the company and continues throughout the duration of the membership with a frequency designed to suit each individual member.

“Specifically in relation to fitness, we continue to work with our members on an ongoing basis,” says Hall. “This includes a programme of structured appointments that can continue for the duration of a membership for those who require it.

“Each member is paired with a dedicated instructor to ensure continuity. We need to build relationships with our members and care about their successes; supporting them for as long as possible to give them the best chance of achieving their goals.

This level of service is offered at a keen price point: “We have a diverse range of sites, but the majority sit within the mid-market (around £35 a month),” says Hall, “but we’re able to offer something different from many gyms that compete in this price range, because although the gym and fitness suite is at the heart of our centres, our fitness and physical activity offering extends beyond this, with swimming pools, multi-sport halls, courts (badminton, squash, tennis) and outdoor pitches also on offer.

“Our memberships allow visitors to access a range of physical activity provision. Not only is this important in meeting the needs of our wide-ranging member





Parkwood has rolled out the consumer-facing Leisure Centre brand, which allows each facility to retain its own identity

- demographic, but it also enables us to bring more people into our sites to experience everything Parkwood has to offer," he says.

The results of this broad offering are above the industry standard, with a 5.68 per cent attrition rate, says Hall, and the customer journey also driving down attrition rates.

Delivering this level of service involves making wider decisions across the business based on delivering on customers' needs.

"Thanks to work we've done behind the scenes with regard to data management and reporting, we can now compare membership cancellation rates between those that engage in our member journey and those that don't," explains Hall.

"Our reports show members who don't join our member journey are 83 per cent more likely to cancel their membership, highlighting the importance of our focus on personalising the entire member experience."

PARKWOOD DNA

In September last year, Hall took to the stage at the annual Parkwood Leisure Managers' Conference and presented his vision for the future of the business.

Entitled 'Parkwood DNA', the term refers to three key areas, as Hall explains: "Parkwood DNA is about driving innovation, nurturing people and achieving excellence. It's about building on our values and what we're good at, and combining this with forward-thinking innovation to move the business forward."

"Our mission is clear; we want to create and maintain sustainable, lasting, effective partnerships that will help us to build happier and healthier local communities," says Hall.

A key factor in achieving this is continuing development of the digital strategy, and a full review of the customer journey was



recently conducted to determine next steps.

"We're striving to be industry-leading but we're not arrogant enough to think we know it all. The leisure industry is still way behind many others when it comes to customer journey and behaviours," says Hall. "We're working with software development provider ioStudios, learning best practice examples from other industries to revamp our digital services."

CUSTOMER-FIRST APPROACH

With such a broad target demographic, leisure operators run the risk of isolating key segments of the market. "In the past, we've found ourselves focusing on those who are most active or engaged," says Hall. "This is the case across much of the industry."

"We realised we needed to come up with ways to deliver a more consistent user experience across all touchpoints – in-centre, on mobile, on desktop and via our app – to engage better with those we'd been neglecting," he says. "We also



The company operates its own-brand health and fitness club

know we need to be making business decisions based on our customers' needs, so ensuring we have the digital systems and processes in place to underpin this is vital.

"We're now able to capture data from all our customers, which means we can be far more targeted with our marketing and successful in our mission to deliver facilities and services to support happier and healthier communities.

"In addition, we're providing a far slicker customer experience in-centre, no longer using traditional membership cards but instead using QR codes on mobile to speed up access. We also

decided against the use of fixed terminal kiosks, instead recognising the need to reduce queueing times by using mobile tablets in reception, which provides a concierge-style service," says Hall.

Parkwood is also deploying AI to improve its service levels, as Hall explains: "We're working on a machine learning content hub that will dynamically serve customers tailored content that specifically interests them.

"Our visitor demographic is vast, and this is just another way we'll provide customers with personal, seamless experiences," he says. "We're

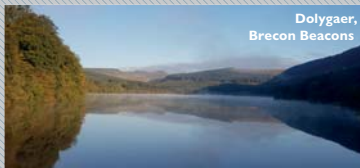
looking to enrich our user communications and improve our entire customer journey, and the work we've done on our new member journey is testament to that.

"It's been developed to help gym members achieve their goals, but at the same time it's helping drive visitor frequency, increasing length of stay and ultimately improving member retention."

A new app has also had a positive impact (read more on page 74): "The app has improved our class bookings process," says Hall. "It incentivises members via challenges and rewards and also integrates with third party apps, so users can compile ▶



Rufford Abbey
Country Park



Dolygaer,
Brecon Beacons



Parkwood Health &
Fitness, Salisbury



Pavilion Gardens,
Buxton

■ GROWTH THROUGH DIVERSIFICATION

Parkwood Leisure now operates over 100 sites across England and Wales and while leisure centres with health and fitness and sports facilities continue to make up the majority – with more than 80 facilities under its management – the organisation has experienced significant growth in recent times through diversification.

Parkwood's estate now includes Parkwood Health & Fitness, the operator's own-brand private health club in Salisbury, as well as two heritage sites, Rufford Abbey Country Park in Nottinghamshire and the Pavilion Gardens in Buxton. There's also an outdoor activity centre called Dolygaer located in the Brecon Beacons and

Plantasia, an indoor tropical rainforest experience in Swansea.

In addition, as part of the Group, the operator is responsible for the management of six golf courses under its Glendale Golf brand, four theatres operated by Parkwood Theatres, and a range of healthcare solutions delivered by Parkwood Healthcare.

- data from across their entire physical activity schedule."

This level of operational change has been achieved as part of an overall review of the company, as Hall explains, saying: "We've experienced a period of transformation and change in the business in the last 12 to 18 months that has revolutionised the business."

"This has been underpinned by Parkwood 2.0 – a transformation project we initiated in 2018," he says. "Now it's time to use our new platform to take the business to the next level and offer the local communities we serve an improved customer experience."

Parkwood 2.0 aimed to build on the heritage and successes of the company, by evolving its strategy, culture and processes to support medium and long-term success.

Hall was central to its creation and delivery in his previous role as operations director.

"The project was as much about conducting an internal review as it was about changing our customer-facing operations," he explains. "We wanted to give managers of our facilities more autonomy and accountability, by investing in our staff and our processes to help drive improvement across the entire business."

DATA DRIVEN

So, what did this mean in practice? Hall continues: "This transformation focused on a number of key areas – one being data management; it's a huge part of our business but it was clear we weren't making it work as best we could. We had multiple data sources in the organisation but they were all in silos."

Subsequently, we've been working with CRM agency, Acteol, to introduce a new Single Customer View system to bring it all together to provide us with the information we need to understand our customers and make better-informed strategic decisions.

"We now have a dashboard for every one of our business objectives, which records, tracks and interprets all relevant data; not just real-time analysis of sales and expenditure control, but also any key metrics around our HR systems, accident and risk assessment analysis, telephone answering, and facility maintenance programmes. This will no doubt continue to grow and evolve over time, but already it's having a hugely positive impact on our strategic planning."

"The entire organisation also transferred from Microsoft to Google. While initially challenging, this new platform has revolutionised the productivity of the business. Google has allowed teams to be completely mobile, with access to all software from anywhere and from any platform."

"In multi-site organisations, this versatility is so important and has been incredibly well-received by the operational team."

BRAND DIFFERENTIATION

For customers, there have been some notable changes, too. "The roll-out of our re-vamped consumer-facing brand – Leisure Centre, powered by leisurecentre.com – is the most significant of these changes," explains Hall.



Hall was contracts manager at Parkwood before moving to be area manager, regional director, operations director and MD

OUR MISSION IS CLEAR; WE WANT TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE, EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS THAT WILL HELP US TO BUILD HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER LOCAL COMMUNITIES

"What sets us apart in the market from other operators is that we run local community leisure centres, not national chains. So we made the strategic decision to provide our sites with a white label solution and lead with the Leisure Centre brand; it's the name of the local leisure centre that people in the communities we serve feel an attachment to, and this way our facilities can retain their own identity and put themselves at the heart of their communities, which is something we aim to achieve across all our sites," says Hall.

LAUNCHING A NEW APP

To coincide with the introduction of the refreshed brand, last summer, Parkwood also launched a new app for all Leisure Centre sites. "The app was a big investment for us," says Hall. "The development process took longer than we'd expected, but we wanted to get it right. It seemed to me that some operators are introducing apps purely because other sectors have. However, the critical question for us was, does it improve the customer experience? We feel ours does."

"The additional time put into its development has created a product which is delivering the desired outcomes. Within eight weeks of launching, we'd had sign-ups from over 40 per cent of



Parkwood is using digital systems to capture data from its visitors, enabling it to better meet customer needs



active members – those who have come to site within the last 20 days – and the number of people using the app is growing.”

Eighteen months on, is the business accomplishing what it set out to achieve with Parkwood 2.0? Hall believes it is: “Parkwood 2.0 has been a success; we’ve achieved tangible outcomes and put in place a foundation from which we can move on and for me, that’s the most exciting aspect,” says Hall.

REMEMBERING THE HERITAGE

So, what’s next for Parkwood? Hall says that although the organisation has experienced a period of huge transformation, it’s important to look forward while being aware of legacy: “I believe that to forget our company’s history would be a mistake,” he says. “Successful companies don’t dwell on how they’ve got to where they have, but they do remember it. Our aim is to retain our core DNA but also to embrace innovation and ensure that this drives continued improvement.”

FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS

First launched in 1995 as Glendale Leisure, the organisation championed a new model of working by taking its broader Group expertise to the local authority leisure market and focusing on improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of leisure facility management. In 2002 the company became Parkwood Leisure and it remains a family-owned business today.

“Our heritage lies in sustainability; we continue to maintain astute cost management and adopt an operationally-led business model, while simultaneously embracing innovation and expressing an entrepreneurial spirit,” Hall explains.

A contradiction in terms? He doesn’t think so. “For some, the traditional values associated with a family-run business won’t scream ▶



Parkwood has developed a new content hub and app, which will be able to provide tailored content for each individual member



Customers can enjoy a wide range of facilities beyond the gym

innovation, because 'cost control' and 'operations' aren't very sexy business terms! These values are incredibly important in our sector and form the basis of our success over the past 25 years, but this doesn't mean we can't also be progressive and dynamic."

PARKWOOD'S PEOPLE

There's no denying the focus Parkwood has on customers, but what about the people behind the scenes? Hall says this is more of a priority than ever. "We employ 5,000 staff and our people remain at the core of what we do. From apprentices right up to board level, we offer the same opportunities to grow, develop and progress, so we keep the best people as long as possible."

The organisation employs over 300 apprentices, in roles ranging from recreation assistant to central support staff. "Apprentices are important to our business, with the vast majority staying on past completion of their qualifications," confirms Hall. "We offer level two apprenticeships from entry-level right through to an MSc Strategic Leadership course in partnership with Loughborough University."

The operator also recently launched a recruitment drive promoting employment opportunities for people up to the age of 80, using testimonials from employees Bryan and Sylvia, who emphasise the importance of staying active and the positive impact it's had on their ability to continue working into later life.

In line with the growing prevalence of mental health awareness in the workplace, the company has also introduced initiatives to help build a positive mental health culture, as Hall explains: "Our HR team has done some fantastic work here; all our HR managers are now qualified Mental Health First Aiders and last October, we launched mental health wellbeing workshops for all staff at junior management level and above. "If our teams are happy, that goes a long way to making sure our customers are happy too."

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

Environmental issues are a priority as Hall explains: "With more than 100 sites, we place a lot of emphasis on reducing our carbon footprint and driving energy efficiency. Working within the ISO 14001 framework, our strategy and performance team has raised awareness among staff and introduced initiatives to improve our energy efficiency."

"As a result, we were shortlisted for two awards at last year's Energy Awards. In addition to making environmental improvements, this has saved the business over £70,000 in the past two years."

In 2019, Parkwood became one of the first operators to achieve ISO 45001; the new international ISO standard for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.

"The certification aims to help businesses provide a safe working environment for employees and visitors," explains Hall. "We made the commitment to achieving certification, not only to ensure we were compliant with industry standards, but also to drive continuous improvement at all levels of our operation."

Parkwood has also developed its own internal training opportunities led by health, safety and compliance manager,



The operator has a wide demographic across its sites, and also promotes employment opportunities for people age 18 to 80

ABOUT 18 MONTHS AGO WE NOTICED A RADICAL SLOW-DOWN IN AGGRESSIVE BID SUBMISSIONS AND SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BID FOR CONTRACTS WHERE OUR MODEL WAS COMPETITIVE. THIS LED TO US HAVING OUR BEST YEAR IN 2019

Peter Mills. These include e-learning modules, a Pool Managers' Academy and RoSPA-accredited health and safety training.

"Peter has been a driving force in health and safety in the sector for many years," says Hall. "Having him on the team has been invaluable. Our systems are robust, which ensures a focus on a positive health and safety culture throughout the organisation."

GROWING THE BUSINESS

"Our approach to business development is increasingly considered," reflects Hall. "The volatility of the leisure market has been well documented and as a family-owned business we're taking a more long-term, sustainable view. We also diversified our business model long before other operators."

"For many years we were less active in the open procurement market; we felt that unrealistic financial expectations were being set by local authorities, which resulted in many operators ending up managing facilities on unsustainable terms."

"However about 18 months ago, we noticed a radical slow-down in aggressive bid submissions and seized the opportunity to bid for contracts where our model was competitive."

"This proved to be a good move, as 2019 was our most successful year for business development, with 18 new sites secured across 10 authorities," says Hall.

Among the new contracts are multi-site deals with Broughton Astley Parish Council, High Peak Borough and Erewash Borough Councils, plus a 25-year lease to run the Riviera centre in Torquay.

Also awarded was a contract to run the new Braywick Leisure Centre, Maidenhead – set to become one of the country's biggest when it opens in September – and a Design, Build, Operate and Maintain (DBOM) project for North Devon's new leisure centre, construction of which starts this spring.

In the visitor attraction sector, Parkwood also secured contracts to run two visitor attractions, Plantasia, an indoor

tropical rainforest experience in Swansea, and the Pavilion Gardens, a conference facility in Buxton, Derbyshire.

"It's a highly competitive market and we want to focus our efforts on what we do best," says Hall. "While leisure facility management remains at our core, our experience means we're able to extend our services into the broader leisure industry."

"Our expansion not only consolidates and strengthens our position in the sector but also, diversifying our portfolio enables us to engage with even more communities through physical activity, social, cultural and leisure provision."

"We're ultimately trying to support happier, healthier communities, and at the heart of this remain the core values we started out with 25 years ago." ●

■ PARKWOOD BY NUMBERS

Number of sites

100, including 73 gyms

Number of members

100,000

Number of workouts

20m a year

Payment models

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Number attending classes

35%

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The Evo Bench helps Class Boutique Fitness to create interesting classes

Top of the class

Class Boutique Fitness has collaborated with Physical Company to create a boutique studio offering that's as inclusive as it is effective

“Where most boutique studios operate within a niche, we approached things from a different perspective,” says Rob Suchet, founder of Class Boutique Fitness in Bath, UK. “Rather than focusing on just one form of activity, we looked at what humans need in order to achieve the broadest range transferable fitness – that is, fitness we can use in our everyday lives. And the answer, of course, is that we need variety in our workouts.”

The boutique club, which opened on 18 February 2019, was therefore

designed around a culture of movement and health, offering both yoga and HIIT classes – restorative yin and dynamic yang – alongside healthy nutrition in its HealthBar café.

GOING UPPER CLASS

Of the 55+ classes offered each week, eight are labelled ‘Upper Class’ to denote a lower impact option for older adults and those new to exercise.

“We don’t want anyone to feel patronised or as though we’re trying to create easy workouts for them,” says Suchet. “Neither do we want them to think they can’t go into the other classes if they prefer. However, we felt it was really important to properly cater for older adults: this is a group of people who can benefit from exercise more than any other age group.”

“Above all, we wanted Class Boutique Fitness to be an inclusive space where everyone feels welcome, and we really do have all ages and abilities in every class: our membership base is about 30 per cent under 40, 50 per cent aged 40–60, and 20 per cent over 60 years.

“We also have a special offer for those aged 60 and over, whereby they get their first month free. To date, 70 per cent have gone on to become members.”

PERSONALISED SERVICE

Suchet continues: “We worked with Physical Company on our HIIT studio, where our Turn & Burn classes offer both cardiovascular and resistance training in just one workout.

“We wanted people to have all the kit they needed immediately to hand, and when I discovered the Evo bench – an inclinable bench with integrated storage – I knew I’d found the answer. We went for the fully-stocked model which holds 2–12.5kg dumbbells, 8kg and 12kg kettlebells, a slam ball, battling rope and two resistance bands. It means we have a huge range of exercises at our disposal, which allows us to create really interesting classes.”

He adds: “Physical Company also supplied Ecore Bounce 2 flooring, a top-of-the-range product that has all the functionality of impact flooring, with rubber backing to protect the joints and absorb noise, but with a wood finish that’s in line with our premium design.

“Working with Physical Company gave us the perfect combination of great products and personal service.”



“We don’t want anyone to feel patronised or as though we’re trying to create easy workouts for them”

Rob Suchet
Class Boutique Fitness

To find out more, visit:
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“

“Gyrotonic has continued to grow via word of mouth. I quickly had people from all sorts of backgrounds and all kinds of disabilities coming to me who the medical community couldn’t help. As I came across different people with different problems and limitations, I started to adapt the technique”

JULIU HORVATH

The founder of the Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis methods talks to Kath Hudson

S

peaking to Juliu Horvath I had the sense of speaking to a legend along the lines of Joseph Pilates or Patahbi Jois. Now aged 77, Horvath has told his life story so many times that he sounds almost weary having to tell it again, but it’s an intriguing tale.

Born in Romania, Horvath became the principal dancer for the Romanian National Ballet Company, but defected while touring with them in Italy, in 1970. After a spell living in a refugee camp, he was given political asylum in the US. After moving to New York, he did whatever jobs he had to

do to get by until, once again, he started performing with ballet companies, alongside international stars, such as Margot Fonteyn.

While he was dancing, Horvath sometimes experienced lower back pain – as a result of a slipped disc when he was a teenager. This occasionally became serious, but no one in the medical community was able to help him, so he started looking into other modalities which could support his body and allow him to continue dancing.

Horvath became the principal dancer with the Houston Ballet Company, but his dancing career was brought to a sudden



Before developing his Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis methods, Horvath was a principal ballet dancer



After a few years of practicing his method, Horvath started devising equipment to support the movements

► halt when he ruptured his Achilles tendon in the late 70s. This was the catalyst for him to spend more time exploring his movement modality. Moving to a small hut in the Virgin Islands, he spent six years exploring yoga and meditation and gaining insights into movement and healing, which provided the foundations of the Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis Method.

A NEW MOVEMENT MODALITY

Horvath says his technique does to the body what opening the windows and spring cleaning does to a house. The movements look fluid, balletic and yogic. They open up and create space in the body, as well as serving to expand and elongate the joints.

Now there are some 16,000 trainers working in around 60 countries, but Horvath says this has all happened organically, via word of mouth. When he moved back to New York in the early 80s, he quickly gained a following in the

“
People have been coming back to me for more than 35 years – I take them to another dimension as they progress, because the dimensions are endless

dance community, as people wanted to know what he had been doing which allowed him to move so well.

“Initially my students were professional dancers who wanted to learn what I was doing and that was the beginning of my teaching,” he says. “It has continued to grow via word of mouth. I quickly had

people from all sorts of backgrounds and all kinds of disabilities coming to me, who the medical community couldn’t help. As I came across different people with different problems and limitations, I started to adapt the technique.

“The exercises support the five basic movements of the spine: forward and backwards, side to side and spiralling. We combine these in any configuration, depending on the specific needs of the person and can adapt it to anyone’s limitation and also their goal. People have been coming back to me for more than 35 years – I take them to another dimension as they progress, because the dimensions are endless.”

THE INTRODUCTION OF EQUIPMENT

After a few years, Horvath started devising equipment to support the movements. Now there are two strands: Gyrotonic classes use a range of specially designed equipment, which



Gyrokinesis classes are performed on chairs or mats, while Gyrotonic classes utilise special equipment



incorporate pulleys and sliding and rotating parts, which all support the body in opening up. Gyrokinesis classes are performed on chairs or mats, without equipment but to the same end.

"The body is like a musical instrument," says Horvath. "With a violin if you over pull the cord then it won't play the right note, but if you don't pull the cord enough it also won't play the note. You have to find the exact pull in each movement and each dimension so the music becomes possible."

Over the past 35 years, Horvath has worked with many people and had countless success stories, including bringing prima ballerinas back from injury and prolonging their careers by another five or six years. He says one of his most



I didn't dream how big this is going to get. I never imagined it would go to the dimension it is now. But it's there, so we're going with it

interesting cases was in the early days, when he helped a man who was half paralysed from a stroke to walk again.

"I'm not stuffed with previous knowledge, I don't have a book, I just experiment and find a way to work around it," he says. "I don't pre-meditate anything. I work with what is happening at the particular time. I didn't dream how big this is going to get. I never imagined it would go to the dimension it is now. But it's there, so we're going with it."

CERTIFIED TRAINERS

People from all walks of life are leaving their jobs to become trainers: doctors, bank workers, physiotherapists.

Training for either of the disciplines has ►



Trainers of the methods are required to undertake continuing education, so Horvath can pass on his latest teachings

- four stages: pre-training, foundation training, a six to 12 month supervised apprenticeship and, lastly, the final certificate course.

Once qualified, trainers are expected to do continuing education courses, as Horvath is constantly making new discoveries: there are around 25 different applications for different physical issues, ranging from dancers and elite athletes to medical conditions.

"I'm still learning – I'm learning with my own limitations and the problems which people come to me with," he says. "Every new person presents a learning curve. I don't have a preconceived idea about what I'm going to do, I just figure out each time how I'm going to resolve the problem. The system is the vocabulary and it is up to the trainer to formulate the sentences for each individual."



For this reason, work experience and self practice is a fundamental part of the training. All of the training is undertaken by the team of master trainers, with Horvath working with them to pass on his latest teachings.

Gyrotonic classes or Gyrokinesis classes are now available at 5,000 studios

worldwide. Going forward, Horvath wants to continue expanding the reach and growing the community, while not letting it grow so fast that it loses its purity. His current focus is on teaching courses which focus on harnessing the power of the breath to expand the mind and improve movement quality. ●

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PARTNERS IN PREVENTION

The recent restructure of the NHS has brought new opportunities for physical activity providers to collaborate with the medical sector.

Dr Ollie Lawton speaks to Kate Cracknell about getting into fitness

Ollie, how long have you been a GP?

I've been a GP since 2013 and at my current practice – Clarendon Lodge Medical Practice – for six years. I've been a partner for five years.

I also have another role, one day a week, as clinical director for North Leamington Primary Care Network; since 1 July 2019, it has been a contractual obligation for GPs to become part of such a network.

In our area, four practices have come together and joined forces in a Primary Care Network, and we get some separate funding to run that network. It makes us more resilient as businesses and gives us an ability to share staff and focus on bigger projects.



Dr Ollie Lawton

But most important of all, it allows us to approach healthcare from a more strategic level, working with other sectors that share our goals of improving health and care, such as social care, education, the third sector and the voluntary sector. The fitness industry is definitely part of that.

Over the next five to 10 years, Primary Care Networks will become the vehicle through which innovative projects are delivered, and that's important for HCM's readership, because if they want to collaborate with the NHS in some way – if a local gym wants to come and give tasters sessions, for example – the local Primary Care Network will likely be their point of contact.



Lawton has launched a new virtual fitness club off the back of his GP surgery



Lawton's GP surgery connects with local groups and patients to encourage activity

► How open are GP surgeries to collaboration?

We probably don't do enough of it, but I don't think you'll find a GP out there who says exercise isn't great. I don't think it's a problem of ethos among general practice or secondary care – we're all doctors and I think we're all on board with it. It's just the way the NHS functions and the pressures on us: we simply don't have enough time or space to think about proactive approaches.

People come in with problems and the NHS is absolutely brilliant at fixing things when they've gone wrong or are broken. But it's all reactive: unfortunately, it's not very good at stopping things getting broken in the first place, and that's just down to pressure.

In a 10-minute consultation, we could probably squeeze in: 'I think you should get moving', maybe mention Parkrun, but to be honest there's very limited benefit in saying: 'Here's a leaflet, go and find out.'

Research shows, if people aren't exercising, it isn't because of a lack of facilities. It's because of the softer stuff: What do I wear? Who do I go with, because I don't know anyone there? What do I need to take with me? In a 10-minute consultation with someone who has never really exercised before, you don't have time to have that discussion in any meaningful way.

What can be done?

It takes a mentality switch. You have to be willing to say: 'I'm going to take some time out of treating ill people – those who are ringing up every day to see us – and create a bit of space to invest in the future.'

That's what we're trying to shift at our practice, and it's the new Primary Care Network that's driving this.



People come in with problems and the NHS is absolutely brilliant at fixing things when they've gone wrong or are broken. But it's all reactive: unfortunately, it's not very good at stopping things getting broken in the first place

DROLIE LAWTON

I now have that day a week to focus on this agenda. There are other important benefits to this set-up – one crucial point is that there will now be fully-funded social prescribers in every Primary Care Network. We've just recruited ours, for example.

I see these social prescribers as becoming the link between health and social care locally. They don't need medical degrees to do this work. What they need is time to speak to people, and even do things with them, and this is what they'll have.

These social prescribers will be given a caseload – a list of high-risk patients – and they'll call them and ask: 'What are you interested in? Why don't we go for a walk together? Or to the allotment? Or for a kick-about with the local football team? I'll do that with you.' And ►



“

All the research shows, if people aren't exercising, it isn't because of a lack of facilities. It's because of the softer stuff: What do I wear? Who do I go with, because I don't know anyone there? What do I need to take with me?





Lawton says the activity sector and the NHS are natural allies in the battle for prevention

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MONEY BUSINESS IMAGES

- then they'll follow up with them regularly to see how they're getting on. I think this will change things massively when it kicks in over the coming months.

The focus will vary by area: we have a very elderly population, so our social prescribers will be doing a lot around dementia and isolation. But I suspect that across every network in the country, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease will be big areas of focus.

Are you able to do anything within your practice?

We've launched a virtual fitness club, on our website and through social media, which we've called a club because we really want to push the community aspect.

The idea is that members of the community – our patients who want to be part of the club – can share their stories to inspire and motivate each other to be active, and we can signpost people towards local activity opportunities through this network.

In fact, we originally launched it with a focus on Parkrun: patients could add the miles they had run to our cumulative total, with an overall goal of 10,000km. We're still working towards that goal: if anyone is going for a run or a walk or a cycle, on their own or with their family, we give them T-shirts and they do their activity, clock the miles on their phone and upload a



We've launched a virtual fitness club, on our website and social media. The idea is that patients can share their stories to inspire each other to be active, and we can signpost people towards local activity opportunities

photo – preferably in our T-shirt – and add our hashtags. We then deduct their miles from our goal.

However, we recognised running is a tough entry point into exercise, so we broadened the club to encompass any form of activity, even if it's just going down to the allotment and moving some soil around. That still has great benefits for physical and mental health.

I'm reluctant to be too targeted in what we're doing. I want this to be for everybody, because I think that



The Clarendon Lodge Club launch saw operators such as Everyone Active offering activity tasters



makes it a social norm. I realise it will probably attract mostly people who are already active, but the whole point for now is gathering as many stories as we can.

For example, we have an excellent blog being written by one of our GPs, who will admit she has struggled with her weight and managing a healthy lifestyle and who's now sharing her experiences of getting into exercise. I think she's being incredibly brave opening herself up like this.

Once we have enough stories, we can start to actively approach more high-risk patients.

So, that's the basis of the club. And the great thing is that doing it this way allows us to separate it from what we do as a medical practice.

Avoiding red tape

If you want to do something like this as a medical practice, you have to work through quite a lot of NHS red tape – I'm sure many of your readers will have struggled with the tight procurement laws and restrictions on what the NHS can support.

But we've created a separate entity, which means we can have relationships with gyms, fitness instructors and other fitness providers. I've never really understood why all the contracts awarded by the public sector have to go to the huge providers. I'd rather have a broader menu of options to offer people.

Yes, some of the providers are going to be smaller, but as long as we go through due diligence to make sure they're safe, why don't we do that? Why don't we collaborate with the individuals out there who

want to make a difference, and who are running all the community-level activities that might appeal to the less active members of our populations?

I think there are loads of smaller clubs out there that could offer something really meaningful – they just don't have the bidding power to go after the local authority contracts, and to me that's wrong.

With whom are you collaborating?

In our club, we'll advertise any activity that helps get more people active. The relationships are loose – nothing contractual or financially benefiting either party. We just want patients to get fitter, so we want to share as many opportunities with them as possible, to make it easy and appealing for them to get active.

We had a launch day for our new club, and various providers were there: Everyone Active had a stall, we had tae kwondo and yoga, we had the Wasps rugby team running HIIT sessions. It's predominantly an online club, but we're planning to do more of these events.

I also approached Freeletics, which is an app I really like, and they came back to say they'd give us a discount code for all our patients.

So, we really are happy to work with anyone who shares our goals of a more active community.

With the dawn of the new philosophy of prevention in primary care that's being led by Simon Stevens – CEO of the NHS – I'm hopeful such relationships will become easier and easier to form. ▶



Lawton aspires to create shared studio spaces which can be used to deliver health and activity interventions in partnership with the fitness industry

► How's your club performing?

We're still at the stage of getting a load of evidence on there – enough pictures, enough stories – but I think we're almost ready to more actively promote the club and work to get more followers across our network.

At the moment, our goal is simply to get more followers on social media, because we know that's a great way to reach people with health messaging. We also know, if they're engaging with the club, they're more likely to be active – and there seems to be no reluctance to share stories. Patients are very proud about what they've achieved: the weight lost, cholesterol levels reduced and so on.

We currently have over 100 views a day, which for our patient population is, I think, OK at this early stage.

Longer term, we'll look at health outcomes as well. We'll track a group of patients with pre-diabetes and see what benefits they gain from the club.

There's a lot of research on how to predict cardiovascular risk out there already, so we'll probably piggyback on that and track this at-risk group as well.

I'd also like to see our whole Primary Care Network embrace the fitness club. It might have started at a practice level, but certainly in my mind it's something that would function better on a bigger scale, across a network of practices. We're still experimenting for

now, and we need to feel our way through the next six months or so, but in phase two, when we do more events and more people start accessing it, it would be great to roll it across our network.

Will you ever build a physical club?

We're miles off that, but yes, we would very much like to do that. We're already looking for new premises and when we move, we want to include a dedicated gym space. In fact, it will probably be as a network that we do this, with all four practices coming together.

I envisage it as a studio space – a room with kit – that would be completely publicly funded. We could rent it out for free to anybody in the local area who wanted to come and deliver services from there.

I don't know of any practice in the country that does that, but it would be great – if you had a patient in front of you who was struggling with back pain or whatever – to be able to say: 'There's a session here on a Wednesday night, pay £3 and come and do it.'

We'd be very careful not to threaten other businesses locally – we wouldn't want to do that.

I'm getting ahead of myself, I know, but I think the model could be that providers would come in to do taster sessions, as at our launch event. If people enjoyed it, they could continue the activity elsewhere.



Wigan Wasps' Tommy Taylor (right), with Ollie Lawton at the Clarendon Lodge open day



In 20 years' time, by helping our population to become fitter and healthier, projects like this can reduce our workload

I see it as a win-win. The instructors would be happy because they wouldn't have to pay for the room. Patients would be happy because the recommendation would come from a healthcare professional, which would in turn apply a bit of gentle pressure to actually do it.

Because the NHS is a trusted brand. If I were to say to a patient, 'you should go and do Parkrun', it would have a bigger impact than them just seeing an advert for Parkrun. But if we actually had dedicated premises to deliver activities from, working in collaboration with other sectors, that would take it to a whole new level.

Ultimately, as primary care clinicians, we have to be thinking about other sectors that can support what we do. The NHS is going to be crippled with increasing numbers of patients and chronic disease. We're living longer, and the funding isn't increasing to counteract that. So, we need to look at things outside of the NHS that can help. This is where I feel the health service and the fitness sector can come together.

What would be your call to arms to other GPs?

Being a GP is a tough job: it involves long hours and can be emotionally and physically draining.

My experience is that it feels absolutely great to do something away from the day-to-day work of general practice with all the pressures that work involves.

I might be a bit idealistic, but in the long term I also believe initiatives such as our club will help us.

In 20 years' time, by helping our population to become fitter and healthier, projects like this can reduce our workload. We'll be able to spend our time on the people who are really poorly, rather than those who have preventable illnesses.

So, as a call to arms, I would say it feels great being part of a social movement like this. It's energised our whole practice. It's something completely new.

We talk about it all the time – everyone is coming up with ideas. Our receptionists are coming in and telling us what activities they did the night before. A nurse who has just gone off to have a hip replaced is constantly posting the 20km she's just done on her bike, which is something she'd never done before.

It's been a really energising, positive experience for us – and I think part of that is that it's totally separate, and away from the grind of general practice. If you use that phrase, most GPs will know exactly what I mean!

Finally, ours might be just a small local initiative at the moment, but I'm sure there are loads of similar projects going on elsewhere. We want to learn from those, and for them to learn from us, so please follow us and together we can make this thing bigger. ●

Find out more:

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PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



Patented Rotators Shield proven to rehabilitate rotator cuff injuries, says **Alex Klein**

Personal trainer Alex Klein has partnered with lawyer and entrepreneur Raj Umayavan Yadhunathan to create the Rotators Shield, a weighted plate that is designed to rehabilitate the

rotator cuff muscles and deliver a full-body workout.

The shield features a patented design, with grip handles at the centre of the plate rather than the sides. This encourages central placement of the wrists and isolates the exercise by creating resistance, making the weight feel heavier than it actually is, due to the gravitational pull on the outer wrists.

Users are able to attach additional weights around the outside of the plate, to create an unbalancing effect, that can be used for rehabilitation exercises.

"The idea for the Rotators Shield came when I was working with a client with

The Rotators Shield encourages central placement of the wrists



rotator cuff issues who was unable to perform the overhead work that I'd planned for the session," says inventor Alex Klein. "Providing the rotator cuff isn't torn, the Rotators

Shield has been proven to rehabilitate a rotator cuff injury back to fitness," Klein adds.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

ROTATORS SHIELD



"The idea for the Rotators Shield came when I was working with a client with rotator cuff issues"

Alex Klein

Dan Wille introduces Life Fitness' on-demand workout library for cardio equipment

Fitness equipment manufacturer Life Fitness has launched Life Fitness On Demand, a digital library offering a wide range of fitness classes, exclusive to its range of touchscreen cardio equipment.

The classes, lasting between 10 and 40 minutes, are designed to cater to users of all fitness levels and offer a range of difficulty levels, coaching styles and even music genres. They are taught by a group of elite instructors, which includes Lauren Bustos, Kenneth Ferrer and Mary Onyango.

"We're thrilled to offer on-demand classes on a full



"Our priority is to help our customers keep their exercisers satisfied"

Dan Wille

line of cardio-equipment," says Dan Wille, global VP of marketing and product development at Life Fitness.

"Our priority is to help our customers keep their exercisers satisfied. With the introduction of Life Fitness On Demand,

exercisers can have an engaging cardio experience on a variety of equipment."

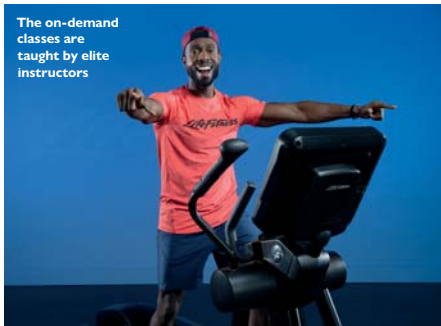
The classes were developed in partnership with production studio NEOU, a New York-based

production studio, who shot the workout classes in high-definition at its studio in midtown Manhattan.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

LIFE FITNESS

The on-demand classes are taught by elite instructors



Tribe Sports 'treads lightly on the planet without compromising on style', says **Emma Reid**

Tribe Sports, a UK-based running apparel company, has launched its Core range, a collection of high-performance running attire made from 90 per cent recycled materials.



"By making tangible changes to the way we run our business and produce our clothing, we're able to address environmental issues head-on"

Emma Reid

The Core range was created in response to the results of a survey, carried out by the brand, that found that 68 per cent of 2,852 runners surveyed said they wanted their kit to be made sustainably and from recycled materials.

The seven-piece collection was developed specifically with sustainability in mind and uses several sustainable fabric innovations, including Econyl, a regenerated nylon made from plastic waste collected from the oceans and landfill.

It consists of both men's and women's wear, with a t-shirt, race shorts and running tights for men, and a racer vest, running shorts, t-shirt and running tights for women. The



Fabric made from plastic waste is used

pieces are lightweight and soft and designed to allow for dynamic and unrestricted movement.

Emma Reid, Tribe Sports MD, says: "We wanted to provide runners with sustainable running gear that treads lightly on the planet without compromising on performance, comfort and style."

"By making tangible changes to the way we run our business and produce

our clothing, we're able to address environmental issues head on. It's a big step, but we're confident we can produce the best performance running apparel on the planet, while we also tackle the key environmental issues."

The brand has announced that it is set on becoming the UK's first 360-degree sustainable running brand.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS
TRIBE SPORTS

Auster System 'surpasses expectations in both aesthetic and experience', says **Andrew Siu**

Auster, a supplier of premium bodyweight training equipment, has launched a new modular functional training system, called the Auster System, that combines dynamic resistance training with gymnastic exercise and traditional suspension training.

The system consists of a special anchor, the Auster Anchor, that features a patented dual-carabiner, that connects to the different training components.

It's designed so that the training attachments can be easily connected and disconnected, and also enables a level of customisation, with operators and trainers being able to choose from power



"Auster is a brand with innovation at its core"

Andrew Siu

straps, dynamic bands, and power rings to create numerous exercise options.

Auster CEO Andrew Siu says: "As the manufacturer of TRX for more than 10 years I wanted to create equipment that surpasses user expectations in both aesthetic and experience."

"The Auster System is an unlimited functional training tool combining



Various training attachments connect to an anchor

some of the most exciting fitness disciplines popular today. Auster is a brand with innovation at its core," he adds.

The Auster System starts at £35 for the anchor and is available in 10 colourways,

while the attachments and adjusters are made from aerospace-grade aluminum, to prevent rusting and discolouration.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
AUSTER

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Working with mental health professionals, you could offer support that helps members with self control

Taking control

You could help members reduce feelings of sadness, conquer binge-eating and improve self-control, using learnings from the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, reports Megan Whitby

New research has found that thinking of sadness as a 'person' – psychologists call this anthropomorphising – can reduce its effects, according to teams at the University of Austin, Texas, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Hong Kong Baptist University.

With mental wellness interventions becoming increasingly provided in the industry, the research – *When sadness comes alive, will it be less painful? The effects of anthropomorphic thinking on sadness regulation and consumption* – could inform future initiatives.

Previous studies have shown that someone feeling sad exhibits a desire for urgent reward and little willpower, such as succumbing to hedonistic temptations or engaging in impulsive purchases.

The research included six test studies involving 1,059 participants.

Authored by Li Yang in Austin and Rocky Peng Chen and Fangyuan Chen in Hong Kong, the study explored how anthropomorphic thinking influences people's experience of sadness and their subsequent behaviour as consumers.

“An individual who anthropomorphises sadness will feel less sad and will also tend to display better self-control in subsequent decisions about consumption

BETTER SELF-CONTROL

Subjects rated their level of sadness following different psychological prompts designed to induce sadness, such as writing about a sad event.

They were then asked to imagine sadness as a person and describe their characteristics and conclude by rating their levels of sadness again.

All six studies demonstrated that anthropomorphising sadness reduces its severity and changes behaviour.

Yang told HCM: “Anthropomorphic thinking enables individuals to view sadness as an independent human being, separate from them, and consequently creates a feeling of detachment.

“As a result, an individual who anthropomorphises sadness will feel less sad and will also tend to display better self-control in subsequent decisions about consumption.”

Humanising sadness had a positive impact on decision-making, leading to an increase in self-control.

“When faced with purchasing decisions, we found participants were more likely to choose a product with practical features over one with indulgent features, once they'd anthropomorphised their sadness,” said Yang.

DETACHED REAPPRAISAL

The research also touched on the benefits of combatting sadness with detached reappraisal – a method where people are encouraged to think of their role in past or present situations as observers rather than actors, hence creating a feeling of distance.

Reinterpreting a negative situation can help people reprocess their emotions and reduce the effects of their negative experienced emotions. ●



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